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HISTORICAL

ACTING CHARADES.

Tryktex Hinge



Saladin Escaping on a swift Dromedary.

HISTORICAL

ACTING CHARADES;

OR,

Amusements

FOR WINTER EVENINGS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"CAT AND DOG, OR PUSS AND THE CAPTAIN;" "THE DOLL AND HER FRIENDS," ETC.

New Edition.



LONDON:
GRIFFITH AND FARRAN,
SUCCESSORS TO NEWBERY & HARRIS,
WEST CORNER OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

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HISTORICAL

ACTING CHARADES.

CHAPTER I.

A Christmas party — Acting charades — Description of the game—Difficulty of finding words—Historical subjects—Curfew—Charta—Oriental subjects—Anecdote of Mahmoud of Ghizni—Saladin—Comparison between Saladin and Richard Cœur-de-Lion.

A large party of children were assembled one Christmas to pass the holidays at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Percy. There were boys and girls of all ages, cousins, or brothers and sisters, with their parents, and myself, who am Mrs. Percy's youngest sister, and aunt to all the children. We spent many of our evenings in acting Charades, the preparations for which gave us a good deal of employment in the daytime, and enabled us to pass the rainy and snowy weather very pleasantly within-doors.

There are probably few children who have never played at Charades, but for the sake of any who may not know the game, I will give a short description of it.

The players divide themselves into two parties, who take it in turn to act and to guess the word. If grown-up people join in the game, the children generally act, leaving the papas and mammas to

look on and guess. The actors go out of the room, and choose a word of two or more syllables, each syllable or division of the word having a separate meaning. For instance: Improbability, Imp-Rob-Ability, Rail-Way, Ram-pant, Miss-Fortune. After having arranged the part that every person is to take, they return to the company, and represent each syllable in its turn, and lastly the entire word.

When the actors are sufficiently numerous, they should be divided into detachments, each undertaking one syllable. The party for the second syllable can then dress while the first is in representation, so as to avoid long intervals between the acts, which are tiresome to the spectators.

Suppose Railway to be the word. Several chairs are placed in a row, with the seats facing one way: the backs represent the *rail* of a bridge. Children stand on the seats, pretending to be fishing, or looking at the river. One walks past as a mother, frightened at seeing her child in so dangerous a place, and calls out, "Oh, come down, my dear Tommy! You will fall over into the water." "Oh, Mamma, indeed it is quite safe; look here!" showing the rail. "Well, if you promise to hold fast by that, you may stay." When the scene is finished, the actors leave the room, and return when ready to represent the next syllable.

Second scene.—A party of travellers following a guide, who shows them their *Way* through an unknown country. The chairs and tables should be arranged so as to leave only a narrow winding path between them; the guide, with a long pole in his hand, goes first, pointing out the *way* to the others, who follow him slowly and carefully, complaining of the darkness of the night, and the dangers to which they are exposed from robbers.

Last scene.—Eight or ten children seat themselves on the floor: the biggest boy, provided with a whistle, sits in front to represent the engine; the rest hold by each other's dresses, and pretend to be a train of carriages hooked to one another. One boy stands alongside with a bell, as the policeman. When the train is ready to start, the policeman rings his bell, and then takes his place behind the rest as guard. The engine gives a loud whistle, and then a few puffs; the carriages begin to move up and down, and scrape their feet on the floor; the engine puffs faster and faster, as if increasing its pace, and the carriages of course jolt and scrape in proportion. When the train has reached its full speed, a dreadful accident takes place; the train is supposed to run off the line: the carriages fall sideways on the floor, the engine whistles as loud as possible; screams and howls are heard from the passengers; the kicking and struggling be-

come tremendous for a time, but gradually die away, and a few faint puffs from the prostrate engine close the scene.

The great difficulty in Charades is to find new words. The dressing and acting are easy enough, but the same words are apt to come over and over again, till there is nobody left to guess them, for the spectators know by experience what the word is to be, almost as soon as the actors appear. But when this difficulty is overcome, it is a most amusing game, and has the great advantage of including any number of players. Materials for costumes are always at hand: shawls, cloaks, bonnets, boas, jackets turned inside out, sheets, and green or red table-covers, are sufficient for almost all purposes. In our own case there was a good supply of everything; with plenty of merry children to act, and good-natured papas and mammas to look on, so that our time passed very pleasantly.

The children at first confined their acting to the schoolroom, but one evening Mrs. Percy invited them to exhibit in the drawing-room. For a long time we sat round the fire expecting them, but no children appeared. At last my niece Ellen, a little girl of ten years old, came to beg that I would help them, as they were in a great difficulty. My nephews and nieces well know that Aunt Esther is always to be depended upon as a playfellow, and I obeyed their summons directly.

In the schoolroom I found the party in high consultation, and, like many celebrated councils, in great confusion. The table and the floor were covered with the goods collected for costumes. Henry Stanley, a boy of fifteen, had a blanket fastened round his shoulders, and trailing on the floor, because, as he observed, "the folds of a blanket make such fine drapery." (N.B. Henry was learning to draw, and considered himself something of an artist.) His sister Lucy, who was twelve years old, and tall of her age, looked magnificent in an old brocade petticoat that had been her great-grandmother's court-dress in the reign of George the Second; Mary, a little girl of eight, had a turban nearly as big as herself; Arthur, a lively boy of fourteen, an embroidered waistcoat with flaps down to his knees, to match the petticoat; some of the girls had mustachios and whiskers corked on their faces; in short, all were travestied in one way or other, ready to act: but, as usual, they were at a loss for a word.

Pilgrimage had been acted so often, that Ellen said the moment she should begin to complain how ill she was, Mamma would be sure to know that the Doctor was coming to prescribe his *Pill*, and the word would be guessed directly.

Income was as bad. The first arrival of the weary traveller at the door of his *Inn* betrayed the whole. Every word proposed was liable to the

same objection. Uncle Stanley would guess one; Aunt Mortimer another; Cousin Matilda a third; and Papa and Mamma knew them all. Moreover, the children were tired of acting common every-day words; they wanted something grand, something that should bring in Kings and Queens, or heroes and heroines; and they applied to me to find them some historical word—something that should introduce Alfred the Great, or Richard Cœur-de-Lion, or Queen Elizabeth, or the Duke of Wellington, or all together, if possible.

But here William Percy interposed. He cared little for painting or poetry, but he was an antiquarian, and very fond of history, and he entreated there might be "no anachronisms."

Curfew, Charta, Alfred, Agincourt, and many other historical words were proposed, and characters and costumes discussed at such length, that I was obliged to remind them that it would soon be too late for any acting that night. They therefore at once determined upon CURFEW.

We agreed that the *syllables* should be represented in any way that might be convenient, but that the *whole word* should always be some historical scene.

First scene: CUR.—A white dogskin mat was tied round Arthur, and a boa fastened under it with the end hanging down for a tail. He practised barking and jumping about on all fours, and when he was quite perfect, we went down stairs

to the drawing-room, the rest of the performers having merely attired themselves in caps or shawls, which were considered sufficient costume for a modern family. All came into the room excepting Arthur and Lucy, who remained outside. The rest seated themselves, and began conversing in an easy grown-up way about the weather, and the health of their children. Of course it rained hard, and everybody had caught cold; and as pleasing varieties, one's little girl had the measles, another's boy the scarlet fever, and the third had a baby with a dreadful cough, which was expected to turn to whooping-cough. In the midst of this agreeable conversation, a scratching was heard at the door—no notice taken—more scratching, then a whine, then a sharp currish bark. Ellen exclaimed,—

"Oh, there is that tiresome little dog of Mrs. Pugsby's; don't let him in, for he will jump up with his dirty paws upon our dresses."

Lucy opened the door from outside and entered, bowing and smiling like a visitor, and saying, "Here is my sweet little dog; I have brought him to see you."

Arthur then rushed forward, barking, snarling, and jumping about in all directions,—his paws on Caroline's frock, his nose in Ellen's face; then his paws on Henry's shoulders; then a loud bark into William's ear. The actors started up, pushing him away, and exclaiming,—"Down,

Dash;"—"Go away, naughty dog—he has torn my frock;" "He has dirtied my waistcoat," &c., and amidst a confused jumble of "Bow, wow, wows" from Arthur, and remonstrances from the others, they left the room, driving the *Cur* before them.

Scene the second.—Children arranging a game, and complaining of being too *Few*. "We really cannot play at Prisoners' Base with so small a number,"—"Indeed there are not enough of us,"—"I wish there were more of us," &c.

It was necessary in this scene to be careful not to say the word Few, for it was rather tempting; but in acting charades, the word itself is, if possible, never to be pronounced. Indeed, some people do not allow of talking at all, and require the whole to be expressed by dumb show. But the game is then less amusing.

Third and last scene.—An Anglo-Saxon family finishing their evening's work before the sound of the *Curfew* should oblige them to put out their lights.

A rowing jersey made a close Anglo-Saxon dress for William, and an old tiger-skin rug out of their papa's study represented a boar's-hide cloak for Henry, who had a bow and arrows in his hand. Lucy and Ellen tied handkerchiefs round their necks by the corners, and pinned them tightly round their waists, letting the other ends hang down like aprons, and threw

scarfs over their heads for veils, folding them back so as not to hide their faces. They twisted some tow round the tops of two sticks for spindles, and Arthur took possession of the dinner-bell. A large folding screen was drawn across the drawing-room, and William, Lucy, and Ellen placed themselves behind it, Henry and Arthur remaining outside the door. William, who had just been reading a dissertation on the English language, charged them to use only Saxon words in their conversation; a few derived from the French he said might be allowable, considering the intercourse between the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans, but no Latin. But as the difficulty of deciding which words were Latin and which Saxon, was far beyond the learning of any of the children, this idea was abandoned.

When they were all arranged, Caroline, the eldest of the girls, drew back the screen, and discovered William as an old Saxon farmer sitting, drinking a cup of mead, and his two daughters spinning; a candle on the table.

Ellen. "Is your mead good, father?"

William. "Yes, daughter Quendrade; all that you make is good. But what is your sister doing? Why do you work so hard, Ethelburga?"

Lucy. "I wish to get this spinning done before the bell tolls, and we have no more light."

William. "Alas, that bell! Hardship upon

hardship since the Normans came. But here is my son."

Enter Henry from hunting.

William, Lucy, and Ellen, all together. "Welcome home, Kynehard! What have you shot to-day?"

Henry. "What *could* I shoot? The deer are all driven to the New Forest. The peasants are forbidden to shoot, on pain of losing their eyes. My bow and arrows are now useless." (*He throws them down.*) "But make haste, Quendrade, and give us what supper you have. Put away your distaff, Ethelburga, we have only a few minutes before the bell."

Ellen put the supper on the table, and they began to eat very fast. Presently the bell outside was heard tolling.

"Hark, there is the bell! Quendrade, put out the light."

Ellen extinguished the candle, and a scene of great confusion ensued, while they were finishing their supper in the dark.

"I cannot see what I have to eat." "Where is the milk? Oh, you have poured it into my lap!" "Take care—you are upsetting the table." "Why, this is a candle I am eating." "Halloa! you are biting my hand. That's my hand." "No, it isn't,—it is the loaf," &c. In the midst of their disasters, Caroline drew the screen.

The word was easily guessed, and, after considerable applause, the children adjourned to prepare for another.

The next word fixed upon was CHARTA, which we thought would allow of a fine scene between King John and the Barons; and it was settled that the boys should dress for that, while the girls acted the two syllables.

CHART was simple enough. They brought the large map of the world out of the study, and hung it up in the drawing-room; the younger ones then formed themselves into a class, while Caroline gave them a lesson in geography.

A was not quite so easy, and for a long time we could find no way of managing it. Little Edward proposed carrying an apple-pie round the room, to remind the spectators of "A, apple-pie." But the young ladies did not approve of this notion; besides, an apple-pie could not be had at a moment's notice. Lucy suggested exhibiting a capital A written on a piece of paper; but this idea was still more unsatisfactory. At last we determined upon the *indefinite article*, and acted it in the following manner. Caroline arranged a narrow table, as the counter of a shop, on which were spread out shawls, scarfs, gloves, and ribbons. Lucy and Mary placed themselves behind it for shop-women, while Ellen, with her bonnet and shawl on, personated a customer. As soon as she entered the shop, the young ladies

behind the counter began asking what she wished to buy?

"What *article* can we have the pleasure of showing you this morning, ma'am?"

"Here is a splendid article, quite new; allow me to recommend it to you."

"What can we tempt you with?"

"I will look about me a little," said Ellen; "I have not quite decided what I shall buy; I was desired to bring home something useful and ornamental, but nothing very *definite* was fixed upon."

"Then, pray ma'am, allow us to show you this shot silk; it is of so undecided a colour, that we frequently call it our *indefinite article*."

Ellen approved of the silk, and ordered it to be measured, and sent to her house.

Now came our great scene, CHARTA:

Henry, Arthur, and Edward marched into the room as tremendously fierce barons of the thirteenth century. Arthur had made capital armour of pasteboard and tinfoil, which was tied on their chests, legs, and arms.

The barons arranged themselves in a row, with drawn swords, and frowning terribly. We could see plainly that they were not to be trifled with.

Enter William as King John, dressed in a green cloak, a gilt pasteboard crown on his head, and the brass poker in his hand for a sceptre. The green cloak had been chosen to represent

one of the "gowns of a good green colour," which John, who took all the bribes he could get, had received from one of his subjects; an incident which William knew, and insisted upon bringing in. We noticed that the king looked frightened and uncomfortable at the sight of the barons and their drawn swords.

King John. "How is this, my lieges? Is this the way for subjects to receive their king? Put your swords into their sheaths."

Baron Henry. "Sire, when your grace takes up the pen, we will lay down the sword. Here is the charter your grace has promised to sign."

They were careful to say "your grace," because kings of England were not called "your Majesty" till the time of Henry the Eighth.

King John. "What is this charter?"

Baron Arthur. "It is the charter granted to our ancestors by King Henry the First, renewed by King Stephen, and confirmed by your grace's royal father, King Henry the Second, of worthy memory. But your grace has not been pleased to observe it, and we now demand that it shall be so secured as to bind you and every king of England who shall come after you."

Baron Edward. "Will your grace sign it or not?"

King John. "What nonsense and insolence does it contain? Let us hear it."

Baron Henry. It secures the lives, liberties,

and property of Englishmen; it provides for right and justice being duly administered, and neither sold, denied, or delayed; it prevents the king from injuring the property of the barons, and it binds the barons to grant the same justice to their vassals that the king shall grant to them.

King John, in a furious passion, stamping with his feet, and banging the floor with his sceptre: "I will never sign it! Why do you not ask for my kingdom at once? What is the use of my being king if I am to have no power over the property of my subjects? What is the use of their being rich if I must not take their money? I shall be a slave myself, if I sign such a charter."

The Barons advanced towards him with their drawn swords, saying all together, "Sign it, sign it, or we will immediately renew the war!"

King John, whimpering, and rubbing his eyes: "Oh, what shall I do! I do not know how to get out of this scrape. I wish the Pope would help me. Oh dear! oh dear!"

One of the Barons handed him a pen. "Your highness must sign at once."

King John, crying: "I am afraid I must indeed; there is no help for it. I am so frightened by those drawn swords!"

He then signed; and the Barons took the paper with low bows, sheathed their swords, and marched out of the room. King John, who went last, was heard to mutter something about hanging the Barons at the first opportunity.

Mrs. Percy guessed the word, and the actors ran off to the schoolroom.

They wished now to have some Oriental scene, in order to take advantage of the shawls and turbans. They knew but little of Oriental history, and I was obliged to supply them with such stories as I could recollect. Several Eastern personages were discussed: the conqueror Chandragupta, who boasted that he had "brought the whole earth under one umbrella:" Nurjehan, the "Light of the world," whose influence over her husband Jehanghire, the "Conqueror of the world," could soften him in his fiercest moods; and who, when he was taken prisoner, went to war in person, and rescued him from his enemies. Caroline did not at all like to give up Nurjehan; but what English words could be made out of her name? It was hopeless. Baber, Akbar, Aurungzib, Mahmoud, were all dismissed for the same reason: nothing could be done with their unfortunate names, though, as Caroline sagely observed, they had as much meaning in their own language as Longshanks or Lackland have in ours.

We might, however, have found names even more strange than Aurungzib or Nurjehan. I do not know what we should have said to some of the old Mexican heroes: King Zutugilebpop, for instance, who ran away with the beautiful Princess Ixconsocil, and thereby gave rise to a furious war.

But Asiatic heroes were what we wanted just now. The children debated long about Mahmoud of Ghizni: there were scenes in his life that would have acted well.

One story especially took their fancy. Mahmoud had obtained possession of the great temple of Somnat after three days' siege. On entering the building, he and his followers were astonished at its magnificence. The roof was supported by fifty-six immense pillars, richly carved, and ornamented with precious stones. The light of day was excluded, but the temple was illuminated by lamps hung by golden chains, and fed with perfumed oil. Facing the entrance stood Somnat, a hideous idol fifteen feet high, which Mahmoud, who was a zealous Mussulman and enemy to idolatry, ordered to be instantly destroyed.

The Bramins and priests threw themselves at his feet, and, with groans and shrieks, implored him to spare their idol, offering a ransom so enormous that Mahmoud hesitated. His courtiers, who preferred money to fighting, pressed him to accept it; but Mahmoud's hesitation was only for a moment: he exclaimed, "I would rather be remembered as the breaker than the seller of idols;" and struck Somnat with his mace. His example was followed by his courtiers, till the idol broke under their blows, and diamonds and precious stones fell out on every

side. It was found to be filled with jewels, so that the wealth Mahmoud obtained by destroying it was greater than the large ransom offered by the Bramins.

While Ellen was still regretting Mahmoud's impracticable name, Henry exclaimed, "Saladin! Sally—Din. Spelling does not signify: Sally—Din combines everything; fighting, noise, turbans, and mustachios." It was unanimously voted that spelling did not signify, and they began to dress. This occupied some time; for helmets had to be contrived for the soldiers, and turbans to be rolled for the Orientals, and mustachios to be corked for everybody.

Sally.—One party of warriors entrenched themselves behind the table, while another besieged them, sheltered behind a row of chairs to represent field batteries. After a fierce attack, the besieged rushed forth in a tumultuous *sally*, and drove the enemy from their works.

Din.—There never yet was a boy or girl who did not know how to make a *din*. In the present instance it was so successfully performed that the audience begged for mercy, assuring us that that syllable required no guessing.

Saladin.—Here was a great opportunity for costume. Girls and boys were all dressed alike: everybody had a turban, a shawl round the waist, a jacket, and burnt cork whiskers and mustachios. Saladin, personated by Henry, kept on his shoes;

but his attendants took theirs off, as a mark of respect to the sultan. Henry said his courtiers ought, in strict regard to Oriental manners, to go barefoot; but in this point it was thought advisable to sacrifice Eastern to English proprieties.

The great Saladin placed himself on the sofa, in a commanding attitude; his attendants stood around him with their arms folded, and their hands hidden in their sleeves, to show their reverence. Just as I was going to remove the screen, Caroline whispered eagerly, "Oh, stop, stop! we have made a great mistake. Saladin, the descendant of Mahomet, ought to have a green turban. Green was the royal colour; all the emirs and descendants of the Prophet wore green."

William. "But you know, Saladin used often to wear a white muslin turban with a thin veil."

Caroline. "Yes; white would be allowable, but not red: Henry's turban is made of mamma's red shawl."

Henry changed head-dresses with Ellen, whose turban was made of a green scarf, and the screen was withdrawn.

When the spectators had been allowed sufficient time to admire the Oriental effect of the group, Arthur entered, as a messenger from the Saracen army. He advanced towards Saladin, and bowed very low three times, touching first his forehead and then the ground, with both hands. He then

took a paper out of his jacket, presented it to the sultan, and retired to a respectful distance. Saladin read the paper with great attention, and informed the company that it was a letter from his brave commander, Caracos, announcing the arrival of Richard King of England in Palestine. Caracos had been able to make a successful stand against all the other Crusaders, but required the presence of Saladin himself to lead the army against Richard.

"He is a brave and noble enemy," said Saladin, "and we will meet him with a spirit like his own. Warlike as he is, in the end we shall overcome him, for I know his skill as a general does not equal his valour as a knight."

The courtiers bowed, the spectators applauded, and the word was guessed.

The uncles and aunts now began to discuss Saladin's character, and the points of difference between him and Richard Cœur-de-Lion, two of the most brilliant personages in history. The children joined eagerly in the conversation, though they all agreed in preferring the enterprise and courage of Richard to the cool skill and policy of Saladin. In generosity, indeed, the two were equals, rather than rivals. William set Richard's pardon of his rebel brother John, against Saladin's release of the Christian prisoners in Jerusalem: and the truce, concluded by merely clasping each other's hands, each disdaining to require any

stronger pledge, was worthy of them both. Henry thought no action of Saladin's life greater than his last lesson to his people. Just before he died, he ordered his winding-sheet to be carried through the streets of Damascus, and a crier to proclaim before it, "This is all that remains to the mighty Saladin, the Emperor of the East." Ellen thought this dying act far exceeded by Richard's forgiveness of his assassin.

While the merits of the two heroes were still under comparison, the clock very unexpectedly struck ten, and the children were immediately ordered off to bed.

"Just tell me before we go," said little Mary, "why Caroline was so particular about Henry's having the green turban; the red one fitted him best."

"Green was considered a sacred colour by the Mussulmen," replied Mr. Percy; "and none were allowed to wear it but the descendants of Mahomet."

"Even to this day," added Mr. Stanley, "they hold it in such reverence that they will not wear green shoes, because it would be disrespectful to tread upon the sacred colour. A Persian and a Turk were once disputing on this subject: the Persian had a pair of green slippers, and the Turk reproached him for trampling under foot the holy colour. 'You Turks must be as sensible as asses to bray such nonsense,' answered the Persian; 'do

you think if it were wrong to tread upon green, that the fields would have been clothed with verdure?' And now good-night to you all."

On the staircase was held a council, which resolved that next day they would compose their charades in the morning, so as to leave more time for acting at night.

CHAPTER II.

Indoor amusements—Illuminated manuscripts—Reasons for the inferiority of modern imitations—Mediæval habits compared with our own—Duel between Lord Wells and Lord Crawford—King John playing chess—Character of Edward the Black Prince—Romance of past times—Magic of the present day.

Morning came, and with it such a storm of rain and sleet, such wind roaring down the chimneys and howling at the doors, such pattering against the windows, and rushing through waterspouts; in short, such a regular indoors winter day, that the children congratulated themselves on having some amusements which did not require fine weather. As it was holiday time, no lessons were expected, and the younger girls took advantage of their leisure to set the baby-house in order, and play with their dolls.

Mary had a beautiful baby-house which her mamma and her sister Caroline had made for her out of a large deal packing-case. It was divided into several rooms, all papered and furnished. Arthur, who was a good carpenter, had made tables, chairs, and bedsteads; Caroline had made sofas and ottomans; their mamma had contrived a staircase of cardboard, and mirrors of pieces of a broken looking-glass, cut into shape at the glazier's, and bound round with gold paper. The house contained a hall, dining-room, drawing-

room, library, kitchen, and several bed-rooms; and a family of small Dutch dolls lived there in great comfort. The mistress of the house was called the Duchess of Zero, and she had two amiable daughters, the Lady Aurora Borealis and the Lady Corona Borealis. The duchess was going to give a large party, and Mary and Lucy were busily engaged in preparing the dinner.

The elder boys and girls had all some employment to which they were glad to give a couple of quiet hours. Henry Stanley had his holiday task to finish; Arthur went to his turning lathe—he was making a little present for Matilda. It was an invention of his own—a broad ring of ebony into which her music was to be slipped when rolled up to take out in the evening. Caroline practised a difficult sonata. William went into the library to look at some curious books which Mr. Percy had promised to show him. Ellen and I helped Mrs. Percy to prepare her Christmas gifts for the poor cottagers in the village; and when this was finished, Ellen sat down to work at a flannel petticoat for her favourite, Susan Gray, her "own old woman," as she said. This petticoat had been in hand for many a weary day; it had been bought out of Ellen's own money, and was to be made by her own fingers. She had set her heart upon finishing it this week, in order that Susan might wear it when she went to church on Christmas-day; but there was still a great deal to

be done. I offered to help, but she wished to do it all herself, so, finding I could be of no use, I joined Mr. Percy and William in the library.

William had that morning received a letter from his father, Mr. Harry Percy, saying that he was just now detained in London by some business, but that he hoped soon to make one of our party; which was very good news for all of us as well as William. The only drawback was that his mamma could not come too, but she was an invalid, and did not like to leave home in the winter.

Mr. Harry Percy's occupations were chiefly connected with antiquarian researches; and, from hearing such subjects constantly discussed, William had acquired a great love for the same pursuits. He was a studious boy of fifteen, but, having had delicate health, had never been sent to school like his cousins Arthur and Henry, and had therefore been more his father's companion than is usual for boys of his age. I found him very happy in the library, looking over illuminated manuscripts with his uncle, Mr. Percy.

Some of my young readers have, perhaps, never heard of illuminated manuscripts, and may need an explanation of several things which were familiar to William.

Before the invention of printing, all books were copied in handwriting; and from the length of time necessary to write out a book, there were not nearly so many in the world as there are

now. The people who had most time for writing were the monks, who used to spend great part of their lives in it. They copied the Bible, or parts of the Bible, books of prayers, and historical works. Their transcribing the Bible was the wisest and most useful employment they could have found; and their prayer-books, or *missals* as they were called, contained many of the prayers and collects which we use in our liturgy at this very day; but they also contained prayers and ceremonies used in the worship of saints; and in the historical works were so many false and foolish stories, that they did, it may be feared, more harm than good to their readers.

As transcribers were obliged to spend so much time and labour on their manuscripts, they naturally grew very fond of them, and tried to make them as beautiful as possible. They ornamented them with gilding and pictures in the margins, and invented curious capital letters, on which they bestowed great pains. The pictures and initial letters were called *Illuminations,* and books ornamented in this manner are said to be *Illuminated.*

These old works are sometimes very pretty, and sometimes very grotesque. Mr. Percy had several curious manuscripts, and I was as much interested as William in looking at them. Presently William said he should like to copy one of the illuminations. He worked for some time, applying occasionally to Mr. Percy and me for

help, and had nearly finished one letter, when we were interrupted by the entrance of Matilda and the children to show the music ring which Arthur had just finished and presented to her.

Matilda, who had just come from Paris, was a lively, good-humoured girl, and a great favourite with all her cousins except William; but he thought her *Frenchified*, and did not patronise her at all. She, however, cared nothing for his dislike, and was just as fond of him as of the others; indeed, I often thought she took more pains to please him than anybody, and that he was in a fair way to change his mind about her. She now came up to the table, and praised his drawings.

"But," said she, "Cousin William, I must show you some most beautiful illuminations I have brought from France; I am sure you will be enchanted with them."

So saying, she ran off, and presently returned, bringing with her several sheets of note-paper with *Madame* or *Mademoiselle* at the top in large gilt letters, and covered with filagree, gold leaves, silver birds, and blue and yellow flowers. William looked at them with as much contempt as was civil, perhaps rather more.

"Are they not lovely?" asked Matilda.

"I don't think so," he answered rather gruffly; "they are mere French stuff."

"Do not *you* like my French note-paper,

Esther?" asked Matilda. "What is the fault of it?"

"I confess I do not much admire it," I replied; "the illuminations belong to no date, and have nothing of the character of the old ones."

"See here!" said William; "this is the real thing."

He turned over several pages of the old manuscript before him, almost every paragraph of which began with an illuminated capital. There was a great A ingeniously contrived out of a dog and a fish; a tall, thin dog standing on his hind legs made the thick or right side of the A; a fish perched on its head the left: they were joined at top by the dog's holding the fish's tail in his mouth, while his fore-paws, reaching across, made the bar of the A.

He showed us an S made out of two dragons, with the tail of one in the mouth of the other; then an R made of a griffin entwined with a snake. They were all brilliantly coloured, and the dragons and griffins looked extremely fierce, but none of us could resist laughing at such grotesque monsters.

"I wonder how they invented those strange dragons and griffins," said Ellen. "Do you think they really believed in them?"

"Some of them did," answered her father. "The monks lived shut up in their convents till they knew very little of the world outside, and

their heads ran upon all kinds of fancies, as we see by the stories they invented."

"Do you know any of their stories, papa?" said Mary. "Oh, do tell us one."

"I have read a good many of them," he answered. "What shall it be about?"

"About a dragon, please," said little Edward. "I like dragons."

"There was once," said Mr. Percy, addressing himself particularly to Edward, "a monk who was sadly idle and fond of change."

"In what century was this?" interrupted William, with his usual precision.

"In the sixth, I suppose," answered his uncle, "for Gregory the Great tells the story. This monk could not be contented without seeing a little of the world, and was always begging for leave to go out. The abbot at last gave him permission. The monk was scarcely outside the gate, when the convent was alarmed by dreadful screams, and cries of 'Run, run! the dragon will eat me up!' On running out, they found him half dead with fear from the sight of a tremendous dragon."

"Were the other monks frightened at it?" asked Mary.

"They did not see the dragon themselves; but they brought the monk back to the convent quite cured of his love of seeing the world."

"How frightened they would have been at real lions and tigers," said Edward.

"They seem to have been rather fond of wild beasts," replied Mr. Percy, "though they had some very odd notions of Natural History. They thought that leopards, or pards as they called them, became very fond of wine if they once tasted it. The hunters, it was believed, used to pour wine about on the ground near their dens; then the pards would come out and smell it, and wish for more. Next day the hunter put jars of wine in their way for them to drink till they were quite tipsy. Then the pards would play about till they were so tired they were obliged to lie down and go to sleep, when the hunter threw nets over them, and easily took them alive. But now, let me show Matilda some more illuminations."

Mr. Percy opened a case in the library, and took out of it a curiously carved box, and from that a manuscript much better preserved than the one William was studying.

"There," said he, "is a Psalter of Edward the Third's time; look at these illuminations, Matilda, and I think your natural taste will show you how superior they are to the modern imitations."

He pointed out to her several initial letters, showing the difference between the old illuminations and the French imitations of them.

"These are nothing to some you might have seen when you went into the Royal Library at Paris," Mr. Percy continued; "the margins are ornamented with the most beautiful flowers, fruits,

and insects; the butterflies quite rival life in their splendid colours."

"I wish I had seen them," she exclaimed; "but how is it, uncle, that the attempts of the present day are inferior? Modern artists are certainly above those of the Plantagenet times."

"Every age has excellences of its own," he answered, "depending upon the circumstances of the time. In those days there were comparatively few people who could read, and they were generally rich, and able to buy expensive books when they bought any at all. There were also numbers of monks who could write, and who had few other ways of employing themselves. The result was, that they spent a great deal of time upon the books they copied, and as one improved upon another, they came at last to the beautiful illuminations we so much admire."

"That only answers half my question. I see why they should do them so well then, but not why they should be unable to do the same now."

"The invention of printing made it no longer worth while to copy books; and fine writing, and all the ornaments belonging to it, naturally fell into disuse. Our artists have given their time and thoughts to other lines of art, and when they now and then try to imitate the productions of the middle ages, they find they are altogether imbued with the spirit of another time."

"But there are very expensive Bibles now,

papa," said Ellen. "The large picture Bibles cost a great deal of money."

"There will always be a few expensive Bibles published for rich people, who like to have them in a beautiful form," her father replied; "but the greater number of our Bibles are happily required to be within every one's reach, and there is no reason for spending somuchlabour on what would only lessen their circulation."

"Those monks were very fine fellows," said William. "There is nothing like them or their works now. I wish we could go back to the middle ages."

"So that is what your love of black-letter has come to?" said Mr. Percy; "but I am not surprised, for wiser heads than yours have been turned by it. But, pray, in what respect were the monks superior to our clergymen! And how should we have been better off in that time?"

"They spent all their lives in religion and study, uncle. How useful their example must have been to the rest of the country!"

"I am willing to allow this to the monks," said Mr. Percy, "that they were the means of preserving the Bible during many ages in which, as far as we can see, it must otherwise have been lost; but with regard to their example, I believe, William, that a whole convent of monks was of less use to the neighbourhood than one hard-working country clergyman of the present day. Your

uncle Howard, for instance, who spends his whole life among his people, and mixes no superstitions with the truths he teaches—you would not change him, with his kind wife and active daughters, and the good they do, for any dozen of monks shut up in their convent illuminating?"

"Why, not exactly; but still I should like to have lived at that time," persisted William. "I heard some people talking about it to papa and mamma the other day. They said it was the time of Poetry and Chivalry, and one of the ladies said it was the age of Romance. I don't know much about *that*, but I should have liked to see the old people's ways, and how they lived."

"What did your father say to all that?" asked Mr. Percy.

"Oh, he only laughed, and told one of the gentlemen that he would have been a good warlike baron, and the other a capital friar to preach a crusade, and that the lady would have been a very proper queen of a tournament. And then she said she should like to live in a real baronial castle, and that nobody could even build such castles now."

"To upset all that humbug, William," interposed Arthur, "just think what wretched places they were to live in; cold, and dirty, and miserable. I am sure a good house like ours is much more comfortable."

"For instance," said Mr. Percy, "how would

you like rushes strewed on the floor instead of carpets? It was considered a piece of extreme luxury in Thomas à Becket, that he ordered his servants to cover the floor of his dining-room with clean straw or hay every morning in winter, and with fresh bulrushes or green boughs every day in summer; that any of the knights who came to dine with him, and could not find room on the benches, might dine comfortably on the floor, without spoiling their fine clothes."

We all laughed at this, and Matilda said their dinner parties must have been rather queer.

"They were certainly very different from our ideas of a pleasant, well-arranged party," her uncle answered; "half the company sitting on the floor, and all eating with their fingers."

"Had they no knives and forks?" asked Edward, in great surprise.

"They had knives, but no forks: fingers were made long before forks, Edward."

"How did they amuse themselves at their parties?" Mary inquired.

"In rather a rough kind of way, I suspect. Perhaps the master of the house might be called out in the middle of dinner to fight with some rival baron, and of course the company would think it polite to follow him: or, perhaps, they might be arranging their own little duels. When Lord Wells was ambassador to Scotland from Richard the Second, he was at a great banquet

given by some Scotch noblemen, and the company amused themselves by boasting of their own bravery. The Scotch said they were infinitely braver than the English, and the English said *they* were far more valiant and chivalrous than the Scotch; and then they all gave instances, and related stories of their own great deeds. When the bragging was at its height, Lord Wells rose, and said, 'Let words have no place: if you know not the chivalry and valiant deeds of Englishmen, appoint me a day and place where you please, and you shall be taught by experience.' The Earl of Crawford immediately accepted the challenge, and appointed St. George's day, politely leaving the choice of the place to Lord Wells, who fixed upon London Bridge.

"Accordingly, next St. George's day, Lord Crawford and his attendants came all the way from Scotland, and Lord Wells and his retainers mustered to meet him and fight it out in a friendly way. They were both equally brave, but Lord Crawford was much the biggest and strongest, and I am sorry for the honour of England, to be obliged to confess that he had the best of the day. The two combatants rushed at each other, and Lord Wells' spear was broken on the helmet of Lord Crawford, who sat firm, not even moved by the shock. The spectators, who thought he must have been unhorsed by such a blow, cried out that there was unfair play,

and that he was bound to the saddle. Upon that, he showed them his saddle and stirrups, and convinced them that he had had recourse to nothing but his own skill and strength. He then remounted, and they began to fight again. This time Lord Wells was thrown, and a good deal hurt. Lord Crawford immediately dismounted, embraced him to show that their quarrel had been all for love, conveyed him to his home, and visited him every day till he was well."

"I like him for that," said Mary, "though I am sorry he won: however, I think it was just as brave of Lord Wells to fight with a person so much stronger than himself, as it was of Lord Crawford to conquer him."

"But, uncle," William remonstrated, "they were not always fighting. They used to amuse themselves with games: chess for one."

"They did; and very quietly and genteelly they used to play. When King John was prince, he was playing chess with Baron Fitzwarine, and the baron won the game, which so enraged Prince John, that he broke the baron's head with the chess-board, and Fitzwarine in return gave him a blow which almost killed him."

"I should not have liked to play with either of them," said Lucy: "but John was so very bad; one might expect him to do anything. They were not all like him."

"No; but they were most of them much in the same line. 'Henry the Third of gracious mien,' as Mary's Chronological Rhymes call him, used to bully his courtiers in what we should think a very unkingly manner, and they sometimes returned the compliment. One day he was affronted with one of his barons, and called him a traitor: the baron told the king *he lied*, and that he never was nor would be a traitor. 'Moreover,' said he, I care not for your anger, for by the law you can do me no harm.'—'Yes, I can,' said the king; 'I can thrash your corn and sell it, and so humble you.'—'If you do,' replied the baron, 'I will send you the heads of your thrashers.' By this time, the others who were present thought the quarrel had gone far enough, so they interfered, and forced the king and the baron to be friends."

"The Middle Ages would never have done for Aunt Harriet," said Henry, "she is so nervous."

"I should say they *would* have *done for her* in no time," cried Arthur. "Do you remember how frightened she was the morning that the strange dog bounced in at breakfast-time? Why, in the Middle Ages, one half of the company might have cut the throats of the other half in the middle of dinner, and nobody have minded it."

"It was not quite so bad as that, Arthur," said his father, laughing; "but certainly the Middle Ages would not have suited nervous ladies, nor quiet elderly gentlemen. Both your Aunt Harriet

and I may be very glad that we did not live then."

"You are rather hard upon the old knights and barons," I said. "You must allow they were not all alike. Edward the Black Prince, for instance—where would you find a better pattern of gentleness and courtesy? always ready to praise and honour others. Do you remember his kindness to the wounded knight, Sir John Audley, visiting him in his tent through all his illness?"

"I remember it well, and I am far from wishing to disparage Edward the Black Prince, or any like him. He was a model of all the qualities that were considered characteristic of a good knight: 'merry, true, loving, wise, prudent, generous, brave, hardy, adventurous, and chivalrous.' All I maintain is, that there is nothing for William to regret in the altered customs of our own times."

"Perhaps not," said William; "only, uncle, please not to make out that they did *nothing* but fight. They were very fond of music. There was Rees ap Griffith, King of South Wales, who had a great feast one Christmas, and invited everybody in England who chose to come; and to amuse them, he got together all the poets and harpers in his kingdom to play and sing for prizes."

"I remember the story," replied his uncle; "but the Welsh were famous for their music;

all ranks practised it, and at that very feast the principal nobles were found to be the best musicians. Afterwards, when Henry the Second thought it proper to return Rees ap Griffith's invitation, and to give him a feast at Oxford, he found it impossible to get up a concert for him, so he did his best to amuse him with eating and drinking, and a little fighting; and he made himself so agreeable, that they said the King of England produced a pleasanter harmony in his court by his good manners, than the King of Wales by his good music."

"I should like to have been there," exclaimed William. "I would rather have been at one of their feasts, and seen the barons and their ladies, than at all the tiresome parties people go to now."

"So would not I," said Arthur. "Remember what grumpy old fellows those barons were, tyrannizing over their inferiors, and quarrelling with their equals: and as for the beautiful ladies, the queens of the tournament, if they were anything like the pictures of them in those illuminations, I should be very sorry to see Caroline or Cousin Matilda go out such figures."

I confess I was rather inclined to take part with William in his enthusiasm for former days; and I could not resist saying to Mr. Percy: "I think you and Arthur are rather severe upon those times. Surely those were the days of romance and poetry: ours is but a matter-of-fact, every-day kind of life in comparison."

"I believe, Esther," he replied, "that is a mistaken notion; the every-day life of one age is the romance of another: the charm lies, not in the times themselves, but in the looking back to them."

"How do you mean, father?" said Arthur. "I do not understand you."

"I mean that the interest which we take in former times depends less upon their actual merits than upon their having passed away. The customs that appear so picturesque at the distance of four or five centuries, would be common-place enough if they composed our every-day life. Suppose our own to have been the early age, and your heroes and heroines to be living now, and looking back to our times, what a golden age this would seem to them: what wonderful tales of magic would be made out of the inventions and discoveries of the present day."

"I do not see what they could make into anything that would sound like magic," said William.

"Do you not? Cannot you imagine their astonishment at a diving-bell or a balloon? If the accounts of such things had come down to us from former days, we should scarcely know how to believe them. What would the old barons have given to see the steam gun? or the baronesses the cloth of woven glass? I think we should have had them grumbling over *their* iron times, and longing to return to the romance of the nineteenth century."

The children, though silenced, did not appear so much convinced by this argument as might have been expected. Mr. Percy, however, said no more, but appeared to be thinking of something which he did not choose to communicate to us.

"After all," said Mrs. Percy, who had a little while before entered the room, "I do not believe in unpoetical ages. Every time, and every common daily life has its own poetry,—

> "The dragon's wing, the magic ring,
> I need not covet for my dower,
> If I along life's lowly way,
> With sympathetic heart may stray,
> And with a soul of power."

Our discussion ended here, for Mrs. Percy had come to speak to Mr. Percy on some business, and we adjourned to the schoolroom to settle our charades for the evening.

"I think," said Arthur, as we left the library, "we might act an old baron's feast. Henry and William and I could bring plenty of clean straw from the stable, and spread it on the floor, and we could sit round and eat our dinner, and afterwards have a boxing-match."

I inquired if he proposed giving this entertainment in the drawing-room, and he was forced to confess that his mother might possibly object to it. I told him that the straw and boughs strewed on the floor in those days were called *litter*, and that his mother would certainly call it by that name now.

CHAPTER III.

CRUSADE—Queen Eleanor of France—Queen Eleanor of England—Old French Song—St. Eloy—Throne and desk made by him—Horsehair beards.

WHEN we arrived in the schoolroom, we made a capital fire, and seated ourselves round it in great comfort, prepared to debate the important question, "What word shall we act?"

CRUSADE? *First scene:* the *crews* of two ships, wrecked, and meeting on a desert island. *Second scene:* agreeing to help or *aid* each other, and beginning to build huts, &c.

For Crusade, I found them what I thought a very good story. Eleanor, Queen of France (afterwards married to our Henry the Second), chose to accompany her husband, Louis the Seventh, to the crusade, with all her ladies. They "took the cross," as it was called, and rode on horseback all the way to Palestine. Nobody can suppose that Queen Eleanor had any religious motive in her crusading, for she showed by her behaviour afterwards that she had no religious motives to influence her in anything: but at that time she was young and spirited, and liked the journey.

"I am sure, so should I," interposed Lucy.

"I should like the riding and travelling well

enough," said Ellen; "but not the fighting at the end of it."

"The fighting would be the best part of the fun," said Arthur; "only unluckily it was not fair: the crusaders had no right to go and attack people who were living quietly in their own country, and doing them no harm."

"But they thought it harm," Caroline argued; "they felt it very painful that infidels should have possession of the Holy Sepulchre and so many other places that Christians reverence."

"Still I think it was not fair," said Henry. "What do you say about it, Aunt Esther?"

"I agree with you and Arthur. After the Saracens had been allowed to remain in quiet possession of the country for many years, the European Christians had no right to go to war with them, in order to obtain it for themselves; though they should have joined at first with the Greeks, in helping them to defend their own country."

"The *good* Queen Eleanor went to the crusades, too," said Ellen.

"Yes; but in a very different spirit from Louis the Seventh's Queen. Edward the First's Queen Eleanor went from affection to her husband, and when told of the dangers of the journey, she answered, 'Nothing must part them whom God hath joined; and the way to heaven is as near in the Holy Land as in England or Spain.'

"But to go on with my story. In the neighbourhood of the French Queen's court there were a number of young nobles who did not choose to join the crusade. Some, perhaps, were lazy, and some thought it wiser to stay at home and take care of their own estates, than to go into a distant country to fight for what did not belong to them. But Queen Eleanor despised them all for their want of spirit, and determined to let them know it. So she and her ladies collected a number of distaffs, and sent them round as presents to all the men who had not joined the crusade; thus hinting to them that she considered them no better than women, and only fit to sit at home and spin."

The girls thought they should like to act this, and I proposed that they should be seen twisting tow round long wooden knitting-pins, to imitate preparing the distaffs with flax for spinning, and then Edward as the Queen's page, take them to the other boys, who would appear in the background, sleeping, eating, and occasionally yawning. But the boys did not approve of a scene in which they thought they should be made ridiculous, and they voted that we had had enough of crusading last night with Richard and Saladin.

VANDYKE would be something new. *Van*—a wagon arriving laden with goods, and the porters unpacking and carrying them away. Two

great arm-chairs set back to back, and piled up with cushions and cloaks, would make a good van, with six or eight children on all-fours for horses. *Dyke*—An interrupted row of chairs, representing a dyke in Holland, broken down: the burgomasters consulting how to repair it.

Vandyke—the great painter, employed in taking the portraits of Charles I. and Queen Henrietta. Henry had seen the real picture in Windsor Castle, and could group the actors like it. This promised well, and was nearly agreed upon, when Mary exclaimed—"Oh, do have something that shall take us all in! please find something for the little ones to do."

"Very true," said Henry; "it is hard you should not have your share. But are there any words that will allow of so many actors?"

I proposed several; and we finally agreed upon MARTEL, RESTORATION, BONAPARTE, MILTON, ROBIN HOOD, and CHARLEMAGNE. There was a question about Robin Hood, on account of its being two words, but the objection was overruled by the little ones, who wished to act the foresters. The boys produced their bows and arrows which had been put away for the winter; and we made green jackets out of the lining of some old curtains which Mrs. Percy gave us, and a crown with gilt paper and pasteboard for Charlemagne and Charles the Second.

A difficulty now arose about Charlemagne's throne: he probably had never anything grander

than an oak chair; and the crimson drapery thrown over the chiffonier, which would make the back of a splendid throne for Charles II., would be quite out of character for his greater namesake. William said, that in his father's hall there were several curious carved oak chairs and settles; but his father's house was a long way off, and Mr. Percy had nothing of the kind. In this dilemma, Arthur luckily remembered an old French song about another French king, who had a green arm-chair:—

"Le grand roi Dagobert
Avait un fauteuil vert:
Le bon Saint Eloi disait, O mon roi!
Votre fauteuil vert est rongé des vers.'
'Hé bien,' lui dit le roi,
'Ils feront autant de toi.'"

"Now," said Arthur, "if Dagobert had a good green arm-chair, Charlemagne may have had a better, as he came later, so I vote for our taking one out of the library."

"What does that French mean, Arthur?" asked Mary, who was no great scholar.

"This kind of thing," he answered:—

"The great King Dagobert,
He sat in a green arm-chair.
Said the good Eligius, 'O my King!
I'm sorry to say a painful thing:
But your furniture grows the worse for wear,
And the worms are eating your green arm-chair.'
'I know,' said the King; 'it's perfectly true;
And one day they'll do the same by you.'"

"Do you, who are so fond of stories, know the story of St. Eloy, Mary?" I asked.

"I am sure *I* do not," said Arthur. "Was there ever such a person really?"

"To be sure there was. He was bishop of Noyon, in France, about the middle of the seventh century, and a very good man. He was a sort of missionary to the Pagans in his own country, and through his preaching numbers renounced idolatry. But the story I was going to tell Mary, I think, is perhaps the foundation of your song. King Dagobert took it into his head to have a chair made of some particular pattern of his own invention, but he never could find any workman who understood what he meant, or would undertake to make it. Just at that time a young goldsmith, named Eloy, came to the place where the king held his court. In those days people travelled about to perfect themselves in their trades by seeing foreign workmen, or to get work for themselves. The trade of a goldsmith was always very respectable, as he was chiefly employed by kings and great men. Eloy was such a capital workman that the king's treasurer took notice of him, and thought it might be worth while to consult him about this chair that the king had set his heart upon. To his great satisfaction he found that Eloy understood the plan, and would undertake to execute it. So the treasurer told the king; and the king was delighted, and ordered the materials to be given to Eloy, with plenty of gold to make the throne magnificent. Eloy set to work, and was so clever, and

so honest, and careful not to waste any of the materials, that out of what had been given him to make one chair, he made two. When they were finished, he showed one to the king, who was quite satisfied, and praised him very much, and ordered him to be rewarded. But when Eloy produced his other chair, saying that he had thought it better to make up what was over than to waste it, the king was so surprised that he could scarcely believe his own eyes."

"I dare say," interrupted Mary, "he had been used to a great deal of cheating from his other goldsmiths."

"Very likely; but when he found that Eloy had really made two handsome chairs instead of one, he took him into favour and confidence, and Eloy became a great man."

"I wonder what the pattern was, and what Eloy's chairs were like," said Ellen.

"There is an old chair in the Paris Library," I answered, "called the throne of Dagobert; the French believe it belonged to him, and they sing Arthur's song about it."

"Have you really seen it, Aunt Esther? and is it very beautiful?"

"I have seen it, but I cannot say it is very beautiful. It is a high straight-backed old oak chair, which looks as if it might very well have belonged to that time."

"Perhaps," said Mary, "*that* was the old one, and Dagobert gave it up when Eloy made him a

better. But do, Aunt Esther, tell me more about Eloy; what did he do when the king made him a great man? Did he go on being a goldsmith?"

"Yes; he was very industrious at his business, and taught it to many others: but he used to study a great deal besides, and generally had a book open before him while he was at work. He made a contrivance which Arthur would have liked; he had before him a desk that turned round and round upon a pivot, with books open upon it, so that whenever he wished to look at any book, he had only to give his desk a turn, and the book he wanted came opposite to him without his leaving his work."

"That was ingenious enough," said Arthur. "Do you know anything more about him?"

"I know that he spent a great deal of money in releasing slaves. Whenever he heard that any slaves were to be sold, he used to go and buy as many as he could, and set them free. If they wished to go home, he gave them money for their journey; but many liked best to stay and be his servants, and those he treated quite like friends. Some chose to become monks, and these he established in a beautiful monastery which he had built and endowed. At last he was made a bishop, and from that time spent the rest of his life in preaching to the heathen. But let us finish settling our characters."

I now thought it necessary to give them a hint

of a misfortune that had occurred the night before, but which the spectators had been too polite to notice. While Saladin was reading his letter, a fly settled on Ellen's cheek, and in putting up her hand to drive it away, she smeared her mustachios over her face, so that she looked more like a half-washed chimney-sweeper than a proper attendant on the magnificent sultan. I thought it would be best for the future to do without burnt cork. But they all exclaimed that it was quite impossible to act without whiskers and mustachios: the young ladies, especially, were so decided upon the point that we were obliged to set to work upon some new contrivance for them. After many experiments we found that horse-hair would make not only whiskers, but entire beards. We had some difficulty in fastening them on, until we bethought ourselves of elastic sandal riband, which completely answered the purpose.

We now wanted a grey beard for an old man. This was made out of tow from Arthur's workshop. We drew it out into long locks, and sewed them to a piece of tape which could be tied round the face: this made a very venerable beard, reaching halfway down to William's waist.

As matters seemed now all in train, I returned to the grown-up people, and saw no more of the children till the evening; but they were still a long time completing their arrangements.

CHAPTER IV.

RESTORATION—MARTEL—The *Rois fainéans*—ROBIN HOOD—Cobra capella—Indian snake-charmers.

As soon as we were re-assembled in the drawing-room after dinner, the performances began.

First scene.—A party of Swiss peasants returning home after their day's work.

They were received at the doors of their homes by their wives and children, who gave them seats to *rest* upon, and brought them refreshments. While they were enjoying the cool of the evening, such of the party as could sing, joined in the chorus of the Tyrolese evening song:—

"Come, come, come!
Come to the sunset tree,
The day is past and gone,
The woodman's axe lies free,
And the reaper's work is done.

The twilight star to heaven,
And the summer dew to flowers,
And rest to us is given
By the cool soft evening hours.
Come, come, come!"

The second scene included the whole company of actors, dressed like ladies and gentlemen; that is to say, some of the boys put on bonnets and petticoats, and took bags and parasols in their hands; and the girls wore hats and great-coats with walking-sticks and umbrellas. One or two old gentlemen had snuff-boxes; and some delicate

ladies fans and smelling-bottles. Thus attired, they were to represent a Public Meeting, at which Arthur was expected to make an *Oration*. He had a large wig, a false nose which he had brought home from school, and very respectable horsehair whiskers.

The company entered and took their places, talking to each other about the celebrated orator, Mr. Splutterham. At the farther end of the room appeared Arthur, who took his seat amidst loud and repeated cheers. He rose and bowed respectfully to the company, and silence being obtained, he addressed the meeting.

His subject was the great antiquity and dignity of charades, and he made a very grand speech full of learning which he had borrowed from his school books. He compared our charades, acted without scenery, and almost *impromptu*, to the ancient performances of Thespis in his cart; our burnt cork to the dark lees of the grapes, with which the first actors daubed their faces; and he favoured us with a violent compliment, declaring us far superior in matters of taste to Solon, because we applauded the charades, whereas Solon disapproved of Thespis and his choruses. Having thus proved the antiquity of charades, he proceeded to infer their superiority to the regular drama, in a manner highly convincing to the younger part of his audience; and the orator finished his speech amidst a most encouraging uproar of clapping of

hands, stamping of feet, and violent knocking on the floor with all the sticks and umbrellas; though among the general admiration, an allusion to "Lempriere's Classical Dictionary" was distinctly heard to fall from Mr. Percy.

Scene the third.—The RESTORATION and Coronation of Charles the Second.

A red shawl and ermine boa made his royal robes; his courtiers stood around him, and Henry in a white sheet, for an archbishop in his surplice, placed the crown on the king's head. He ascended the throne, and all the company shouted "Long live King Charles the Second!" Arthur then came forward as the poet Dryden, and, kneeling, presented his complimentary ode. The king accepted it graciously, but, having read it, he said to Dryden, "You made a better ode than this for Cromwell."

"Sire," answered Dryden, "we poets succeed better in fiction than in truth."

MARTEL.—The only meaning we could find for MAR was that of spoiling or *marring* a piece of work. It was not a very good scene, and we got through it quickly. Caroline sat working at her frame for a little while, and presently complained that the pattern was difficult; that she had made so many mistakes that her work was quite spoilt and not worth finishing; and she would cut it out and throw it away. The spectators were not able to guess this syllable till the second was acted.

TEL.—The costumes now required were those of Swiss peasants. The boys had pointed hats made of pasteboard, with coloured calico cut into strips for ribands. The girls wore aprons, handkerchiefs pinned over their shoulders, and their brothers' summer straw hats put on very much on one side.

The children had at first composed this scene for themselves, and it may be imagined what a fierce Gesler, and what a grand William Tell they had arranged. Arthur had practised frowning for Gesler till he looked as if he would never become good-tempered again. The tyrant's hat was to hang on the pole of a fire-screen, guarded by two soldiers; and the peasants were to walk past, bowing with great humility. Tell was to enter the room, looking at the hat with indignant contempt, and of course not condescending to pay the slightest respect to it. The soldiers were then to arrest him, and detain him prisoner till Gesler should stalk in, frowning at every step, and stopping now and then to kick any peasant who happened to be in his way. Then was to follow a dialogue between the insolent Gesler and the dignified Tell, and the cruel sentence was to be passed, commanding the hero to shoot at an apple placed on the head of his only son.

But the story was so hackneyed, and every detail so familiar to the youngest child, that I persuaded them to give up acting it at full length,

and merely to represent, in dumb show, the point of greatest interest.

The performers were therefore put into proper positions behind the folding screen, Gesler's hat hung as at first proposed, and little Edward, as Tell's son, was bound to the pole with an apple on his head. William Tell placed himself in the act of drawing his bow and taking aim at the apple; the rest of the peasants were in different attitudes of horror and alarm: one clasping her hands, and looking intently at the child; one hiding her face; one clenching his fist and looking over his shoulder at the tyrant, while Gesler himself stood leaning against the piano-forte, with his arms folded, and a scowl on his face.

When all was ready, I cautioned them to remain perfectly still, and withdrew the screen. In this manner they formed a tableau for about half a minute, and when they could no longer keep steady, I replaced the screen. The company found no difficulty in guessing the meaning, and the name of the Swiss hero resounded on all sides.

Third scene.—In the early times of France, that is to say, in the seventh and eighth centuries, there reigned several kings who were so idle and worthless, that they are known in history by the name of *les Rois fainéans*—the Sluggard Kings. They spent their time in feasting and amusing themselves, and left the business of the kingdom to the prime minister, who was called Mayor of the Palace. Some of the mayors were ambitious

men, and anxious to become kings themselves, and they were very tyrannical to the unlucky Sluggard in whose name they governed, keeping him almost a prisoner in his own palace. They were obliged, now and then, to bring him out, in order to show the people that he was alive; and at those times they used to have grand processions, in which they exhibited the king in full dress, like a great doll; and, when the pageant was over, took him back to his palace. Some of these mayors were in other respects good rulers, and did all in their power for the advantage of the country. The greatest of them, Charles Martel, defeated the Saracens, who were then making war upon France, and governed the country so well, that the people would gladly have made him king; but he refused the crown, and contented himself with the title of Duke of France.

We represented this scene in another silent tableau.

In the background were seen the sluggard king and three of his companions, asleep round a table at which they had been feasting. The king was leaning back in a chair, with his crown on his head, his eyes shut, and his mouth wide open. Two of the companions were sitting with their heads resting on the table, and the third was lying on the floor. In the front of the picture stood Charles Martel, with three persons kneeling before him, and offering him a crown; he putting it away from him with one hand, pointed with the other to the king as the lawful possessor.

This answered very well, and, by careful arrangement of the lights, had a picturesque effect; but I had great difficulty in persuading the king and his companions not to snore: Arthur thought snoring would be an immense improvement, but I succeeded at last in convincing them that, as they intended to imitate a picture, any sound or movement would be fatal to the effect.

Now came on Robin Hood.

There had been great difficulty in deciding how to act Robin. Lucy proposed bringing in a tame bird, and showing it to the company; but the only bird in the house was Caroline's canary bird, and nobody could be expected to understand that a canary was meant for a robin. Caroline advised that Henry, dressed as an old gardener, should draw little Edward across the room in a chair, in hopes of reminding the spectators of Cowper's lines:

> "And where the gardener *Robin*, day by day,
> Drew me to school along the public way,
> Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapt
> In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capt," &c.

But this would not be clear, as the gardener Robin was not really the principal person to whom the lines referred; and the company might guess *coach* or *child*, quite as well as *Robin*. Still we agreed that some reference to poetry would be our most likely way of indicating the word, and we finally acted it in the following manner.

Caroline came into the room, accompanied by Ellen, with a plate in her hand.

Caroline. "Now, sister, let us feed the birds.

I hope you have plenty of crumbs for them, this cold weather."

Ellen. "Yes; here is a good plateful. But I hope we shall have some other visitors besides sparrows. Oh, there is our pretty favourite; how tame and confiding he is!"

Caroline. "Art thou the bird whom man loves best,
The pious bird with the scarlet breast,
Our little English Robin?
The bird that comes about our doors
When autumn winds are sobbing?"

"Very well," said Mr. Percy; "but why did you leave out the rest of the stanza?

"Art thou the Peter of Norway boors?
Their Thomas in Finland,
And Russia far inland?
The bird who, by some name or other,
All men who know thee call their brother,
The darling of children and men?"

"Because, papa, we could not understand it," Ellen replied. "What does 'the Peter of Norway boors, and Thomas in Finland' mean?"

"Peter and Thomas are the human names given to the bird in Norway and Finland, as Robin is in England. It is a friendly way of speaking of him, as he is a universal favourite; and there are also other birds called by the names of men and women. Cannot you think of them?"

"Yes, to be sure; there is Tom Tit," said Ellen.

"And Jack Daw," cried Arthur.

"And Poll Parrot," said Edward.

"And you may add Jenny Wren," said Mr. Percy. "Now go on to your next scene."

Scene the second.—Hood. This had been difficult to arrange. Lord Hood's naval victories were impossible to manage, though Arthur was very anxious to give orders from the quarter-deck through a speaking trumpet, and had been in the morning practising with the coachman, to the great alarm of the horses. After repeatedly giving the order for closer action in the drawing-room, he had been successively banished to the schoolroom, the servants' hall, and the stables, where he finally established himself over the trapdoor of the hay-loft, which served him for a main hatchway.

Little Red Riding *Hood* was despised as too silly. Henry said that as people were fond of poetry, he should like to introduce *his* favourite poet Thomas Hood, and his "Schoolboy Recollections:"

> "The meeting sweet that made me thrill,
> The sweetmeats that were sweeter still,
> No *satis* to the *jams*."

But at last the actors resolved upon the Cobra capella, or hooded snake of India, who always shows his *hood* when he is going to bite. It was rather far-fetched, but we could think of nothing better, and Henry had heard a good deal about snakes and snake-charmers from an Indian friend of his father's, and liked the subject.

Several of the children were arranged as a party of English ladies and gentlemen in India, sitting in their verandah, with servants in oriental costume fanning them.

Enter Henry as a snake-charmer, coming to exhibit his art. His snake was made of a coil of wire, sewed up in a tight-fitting case of speckled green silk, wide at the head to represent the *hood*. It was coiled round, and shut down in a basket, so that when the lid was taken off, the snake started up suddenly like a jack in the box. This was one of Arthur's contrivances, and it answered extremely well. Henry shook the basket a little, and the coil of wire waved from side to side like a snake dancing.

William. "Look, now he is making it dance."

Ellen (who was supposed to be a young lady lately arrived from Europe). "But is that really a Cobra? How do you know?"

William. "It is certainly a Cobra. Look at its head: do you see how it has spread out the skin? That is called its hood, and when that is spread we know that the snake is angry and going to bite."

Ellen. "Is there no danger of its hurting anybody?"

William. "No, the charmer can manage it. But that will do for the present. Take it away."

Henry made salaam to everybody, shut down his snake in its basket, and retired.

Third scene.—Robin Hood and all his attendants came through the room, dressed in green, and carrying bows and arrows: Robin Hood himself being provided with the old post-horn that hung up in the hall. They sang in chorus!—

"Merry it is in good green wood
When the mavis and merle are singing;
When the deer sweeps by, and the hounds are in cry,
And the hunter's horn is ringing."

This scene included all the children; for the train in constant attendance on Robin Hood furnished a character for everybody.

"Bold Robin Hood and all his band,—
Friar Tuck with quarter-staff and cowl,
Old Scathelock with his surly scowl,
Maid Marian, fair as ivory bone,
Scarlet, and Mutch, and Little John."

They acted the common story of Robin Hood and his band robbing a bishop and giving the money to a beggar.

Robin Hood had scarcely finished being generous with his stolen goods when tea was brought in, and our acting stopped for a time.

Many questions were now asked about the snake-charmers. "I wonder," said Mary, "whether those stories of charming the snakes are true."

"*I* wonder how they do it," exclaimed Henry. "The stories are true enough, are they not, father?"

"Quite true," replied Mr. Stanley. "Mr. Merton told me that when he was in India, the snake-charmers sometimes brought him eight or ten cobra capellas at a time, and one man could manage them all."

"Oh, papa," exclaimed Lucy, "do you remember Mr. Merton's story about the monkey?"

"What monkey?"

"I recollect now you were not there when he told Henry and me about it. A snake-charmer

brought a cobra in one basket, and a little monkey, dressed up like an old woman, in another; and put them out on the floor. Then he made the snake dance, and every now and then told the monkey to kiss it; so she took hold of its hood with her two paws, and put her face close to it; then the cobra darted forward with a hiss—*f-i-t-ch!* like a cat quarrelling with a dog. It could not really hurt, because its poison had been taken out; but the poor monkey did not like it, and jumped away, chattering and scolding, and wiping her face with her paws, and looking very much disgusted. Mr. Merton said he could not help laughing at it, though he did not like to have it teased."

"How do they gain such power over the snakes?" Ellen asked.

"By long practice;" her uncle replied: "the trade descends from father to son, and they begin when children, going out with their fathers and learning to catch harmless snakes, till at last they become so expert that they can seize the most venomous without danger."

"How do they take out the poison?"

"They grasp the snake by the neck, and squeeze it till it opens its mouth, and the poison drops out of the fang. They collect this very carefully, and make pills of it. It is one of their favourite medicines."

"How very nasty!" said Ellen. "I am glad we have not to take such physic as that."

"Other people besides the Hindoos have learnt

to catch venomous snakes," said Mrs. Percy. "The Moravian missionaries in the Nicobar Islands used to be as clever in that line as any snake-charmers; but their method was to take a piece of red cloth, and wave it before the snake, who immediately darted at it. The person who held it dragged it back with a jerk which drew the snake's tooth. Before it had time to recover, he slipped his hand up its back, and grasped it firmly by the neck, so that it could not escape."

"English snakes are easily caught, and not poisonous;" said Arthur. "A boy at school told me he had kept one quite tame in his room at home for a long time. I wish we could catch one and tame it."

"I beg you will do no such thing," exclaimed his mother; "there are plenty of pets in the world without taming snakes."

"They are not amiable, indeed, Arthur," said Mr. Stanley. "I kept one for a little while, when I was a boy; but it used to stand up on its tail and hiss at me, and I soon grew tired of it."

The conversation was here interrupted by a loud ring at the house-bell.

CHAPTER V.

Arrival of Uncle Harry—Words for acting—Anecdotes of Henry III., Robert of Normandy, William Rufus—Bonaparte.

The only one of our Christmas party not yet arrived, was Mr. Harry Percy, William's father; and he was anxiously expected, for "Uncle Harry" was the particular favourite of all his nephews and nieces. To our great delight, it proved that the ring we had heard was to announce his arrival; and in he walked: a day sooner than was expected. He had had a very cold drive from London, so we gave him the warmest corner by the fire, and plenty of tea, and made him as comfortable as possible; and Ellen jumped up on his lap, and threw her arms round his neck, and said, "Oh, my darling uncle, how glad I am to see you! We thought you could not come till to-morrow."

"I thought so too," he answered; "but I found I could get off this afternoon, and your Aunt Laura insisted on my coming, for she knows how glad I am to have an extra day with you; and her mother and sister are staying with her, so she will not be lonely."

He then gave William a letter from his mother, and we all began inquiring after her, for it was

a great disappointment that she could not be with us; and after that, we told him everything that we had done since we had seen him last; and the children described their amusements at great length, particularly the Charades. Uncle Harry entered into everything, and suggested a great many words for our acting. Rebel-Lion; Tudor, Two-Door; Shake-Spear; Wolsey, Wool-Sea; Huguenot, Hew-Go-not: Car-Din-all; Penelope, Pen-Elope; Cressy, Cress-Sigh; Becket, Beck-Eat or Ate; Montague.

"Montague would be capital," exclaimed Arthur, "because of *Ague*. How we would shake!"

But we were obliged to stop Uncle Harry's suggestions, for if he continued telling the words to everybody, of course we could not act them afterwards.

Henry said Thomas à Becket would be a very good word, because they should like to act his murder. The boys had always a great love for stabbing scenes, but the girls objected to them, as "too horrid;" and Caroline reminded us of another story about the archbishop, in her opinion much fitter for play.

One day King Henry the Second and Thomas à Becket were riding together, the king in his common dress, and the archbishop in a very fine scarlet mantle lined with ermine. A poor man in the road asked charity.

"Do not you think, my lord bishop," said the

king, "that it would be a good act to give that poor beggar a mantle to keep him warm?"

"A very good act indeed," answered the archbishop, "and worthy of your grace."

"Here then, friend," cried the king, seizing Becket's own mantle to give to the beggar.

Becket fought for his cloak, and he and the king had a regular struggle; but the king got the better, and the beggar got the cloak.

"Here is another story about cloaks for you," said Uncle Harry; "and you might act this if you liked."

"Robert, Duke of Normandy, father of William the Conqueror, was so celebrated for his manners and ready wit, that it was thought impossible to put him off his guard, and that in any company, or under any circumstances, he would be sure to say and do exactly the right thing. Once when he was travelling through Constantinople, he and his attendants were invited to dine with the Greek emperor, and accepted the invitation with their usual courtesy. But the emperor had heard the fame of Robert's manners, and was determined to put them to the test; in fact, he had given the invitation for the express purpose of trying how so polished a person would behave under disagreeable circumstances: he contrived, therefore, that when Robert and his Normans entered the banqueting hall, they should find all the seats occupied, and no places left for them."

"How very rude," said Lucy. "If I had been Robert, I would have walked out again."

"I dare say you would, and so would many people; but Robert gave them a better reproof. He and his attendants took no notice of the emperor's incivility, but quietly unfastened their cloaks, folded them up, laid them on the floor, and seated themselves upon them. There they remained all dinner-time, in perfect good humour, eating whatever was given them, enjoying themselves extremely, entering into all that went on, and making themselves so agreeable, that they were the life and spirit of the party. When the banquet was over, they took leave very gracefully, and walked out of the room, leaving their cloaks, which were of great value, on the floor. The emperor, much surprised, sent one of his courtiers to beg they would put them on. Duke Robert turned to the messenger with a very polite bow, and answered: 'Go, tell your master that it is not the custom of the Normans to carry about with them the seats that they use at an entertainment.'"

"Well done!" said Arthur. "I hope the emperor was ashamed of himself."

"I think he must have been," said Mary. "But, Uncle Harry, how much do you think their cloaks cost?"

"I do not know how much those particular ones cost; but expensive cloaks were the fashion.

Henry the First had one worth a hundred pounds—that is, fifteen hundred pounds of our money; and Richard Cœur-de-Lion had another still dearer, ornamented all over with silver stars and half moons."

"After all," observed Mrs. Mortimer, "I dare say *we* should think those expensive cloaks coarse and heavy."

"Very likely," he answered. "I need not tell a lady fresh from Paris that the price of dress depends chiefly on fashion and fancy. William Rufus refused to buy a cheap pair of stockings, because he said it was beneath his dignity to wear any that cost less than ten pounds: so they brought him back the same pair at ten pounds, and he said, 'Ah, this is right—this is serving me like a king;' and bought them very contentedly."

"But now I want to see some of these famous charades: there will be time for one or two before you go to bed, if you dress quickly."

The children scampered away, but, as is usually the case, they were all the slower for being in a hurry; and they were a long time settling whether they should give up Milton or Bonaparte, as there would not be time for both. At last they decided upon retaining Milton, though with some regret, for Bonaparte had great capabilities—viz., first, Henry and Arthur as two dogs quarrelling over a *Bone*. That would have

allowed of fine snarling, growling, and barking. Then, *a Party* would have included the whole company of actors: some to be "at home," others to arrive as company; and there would have been curtseys, and politenesses, and grown-up conversation about politics and polkas, wisdom and worsted work.

Bonaparte would have been acted by Henry in a grey great coat, with his arms folded in the true Napoleon attitude, standing on the sea shore at St. Helena, while Caroline was to have repeated at a distance, just to direct the attention of the spectators:

> "Then haste thee to thy sullen isle,
> And gaze upon the sea;
> That element may meet thy smile,
> It ne'er was ruled by thee:
> Or trace with thine all idle hand,
> In loitering mood, upon the sand,
> That earth is now as free."

It would have had a fine effect, no doubt; but there was not time for it, and they determined upon Milton.

CHAPTER VI.

MILTON—Quotations from "Paradise Lost"—CHARLEMAGNE—Invention of Clocks—Henry the First's menagerie—Ancient prices—Watch supposed to have belonged to Robert Bruce.

MILTON. Here had been a puzzle. There were wind mills, water mills, steam mills, powder mills, chocolate mills, paper mills, tread mills, corn mills, coffee mills, cotton mills, Mr. Alfred Mills, who wrote a tiny history of England for children twenty years ago, and Professor Mill, the great Oriental scholar of the present day. Which should they have? "Plenty of choice," as Arthur observed. "L'embarras des richesses," said Lucy, who was fond of picking up French phrases from Matilda. They fixed upon Don Quixote doing battle with the *windmill*, which he took for a giant.

It was well acted. Henry, as Don Quixote, was solemn, grand, and valorous, and his bombastic speeches to the imaginary giant were extremely fine; but nobody could guess it. Mrs. Percy suggested Giant, Mr. Stanley, Quixote, Uncle Harry guessed Don, being a word of one syllable; somebody mentioned Windmill, but no one thought of Mill, so they were left in suspense till the next scene.

TON. Arthur as a fashionable gentleman, very

fine and affected, giving himself all kinds of airs.

His mother guessed the word directly, but told him she hoped he meant it for *mauvais ton*, because really well-bred people never give themselves any airs at all.

Milton. William as Milton in his blindness, dictating the Paradise Lost to his two daughters.

Lucy and Ellen sat at a table near him, writing, while he dictated the following passage :—

> . . . "Thus with the year
> Seasons return, but not to me returns
> Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
> Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine ;
> But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
> Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
> Cut off, and for the Book of Knowledge fair
> Presented with an universal blank
> Of Nature's works, to me expung'd and raz'd,
> And Wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.

This scene went off very successfully and smoothly at the time, though it had occasioned a great deal of discussion in the morning. The point in dispute had been—what passage of Milton to choose. Caroline wished for the Spirit's soliloquy at the end of Comus ; Ellen for some part of the Allegro ; particularly the description of the lark bidding good-morrow through the sweet briar at the window : but the Comus, and the Allegro and Penseroso were written before Milton was blind, so that either the dictation scene must be given up, or we must have recourse to the Paradise

Lost. Paradise Lost was accordingly produced from Caroline's book-shelves, and she and I read aloud to the children our favourite passages, or discovered some one hitherto unremarked, and wondered how we could have passed over lines so beautiful.

The selection occupied a long time, for Milton, once opened, can scarcely be closed again by young or old. Besides, there was another difficulty: William had very little time to learn the passage, and would not undertake more than a dozen lines. Arthur proposed, rather mischievously, the description of the monks in the Limbo of Vanity:

> "Eremites and friars,
> White, black, and grey, with all their trumpery.
> . . . . . .
> And they who, to be sure of Paradise,
> Dying, put on the weeds of Dominic,
> Or in Franciscan think to pass disguis'd.
> . . . . . .
> A violent cross wind from either coast
> Blows them transverse ten thousand leagues away
> Into the devious air; then might ye see
> Cowls, hoods, and habits, with their wearers, tost
> And flutter'd into rags; then reliques, beads,
> Indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls,
> The sport of winds."

But William would not learn anything against his favourite monks; he owned, looking rather ashamed, that he could not stand up for "reliques, beads, indulgences," or any such "trumpery," but still he did not like to repeat a whole passage against monks.

Caroline would have liked one of Eve's

speeches, particularly part of her lamentation on quitting Eden :—

> "Must I thus leave thee, Paradise! thus leave
> Thee, native soil, these happy walks and shades,
> Fit haunt of Gods! where I had hope to spend,
> Quiet though sad, the respite of that day
> That must be mortal to us both? O flowers,
> That never will in other climate grow,
> My early visitation, and my last
> At e'en, which I bred up with tender hand,
> From the first opening bud, and gave ye names,
> Who now shall rear ye to the sun, or rank
> Your tribes, and water from the ambrosial fount?"

The others said Caroline chose this passage because she was fond of her own garden; and William finally decided upon the one already given, which had the advantage of explaining the scene.

The next charade was soon ready.

Scene the first.—There was no avoiding the word this time. "Welcome to *Charlie*" was sung in full chorus.

Scene the second.—Balboa and his followers crossing the ridge of mountains on the isthmus of Darien, and first catching sight of the *Main* Ocean.

This was acted entirely in dumb show. Balboa and his Spanish followers were dressed in short cloaks, with swords and mustachios. Arthur, as their Indian guide, in a blanket, and with a splendid head-dress of peacock's feathers stuck round his head like a shuttlecock. All the lights in the room were extinguished, except one table-lamp, which I undertook to manage.

The door opened, and the Indian entered, showing the Spaniards the way. I turned the lamp down slowly to represent night coming on, and when it grew nearly dark, the adventurers laid themselves on the ground wrapped in their cloaks, and went to sleep.

In course of time the light began to re-appear, and when day was breaking, Balboa started to his feet, and gently woke the guide, and they silently picked their way among their sleeping comrades, whose arms and dresses strewed the ground.

The two now set out for a further journey across the room, and were evidently ascending a rugged mountain, for they had to climb over chairs, and turn round to help each other. At last they reached the top of the sofa, when the guide suddenly pointed to the distance, striking out with his arms as if swimming, to indicate sea. Balboa, after enjoying in silence the first view of the distant *Main*, pointed to his sleeping comrades, and the guide went back to fetch them. When they arrived at the top, they all took off their caps, drew their swords, and held them out towards the sea, to show that they took possession of it in the name of the King of Spain.

Charlemagne.—The ambassadors of the Caliph Haroun Alraschid bringing to Charlemagne a present of a striking clock, the first that had been seen in France. Charlemagne sat in state in the arm-chair surrounded by his courtiers

in old French costume,—or at least as much of it as we could manage; clogs to imitate wooden shoes, long mantles and boas: with which the Oriental dresses of the Caliph's ambassadors made a picturesque contrast.

We had been careful to collect all the fur boas and tippets in the house, because furs were particularly the fashion at the court of Charlemagne, and though his young noblemen could only boast of wooden shoes, like the *sabots* French peasants wear at the present day, they were very particular about the beauty of their mantles. Charlemagne liked them to be well-dressed on all state occasions, but at other times he discouraged finery. One day, a number of them appeared at court in gay silk robes, lined and trimmed with valuable furs. Charlemagne did not at all approve of this costume, but he took no notice, and ordered them immediately to go out hunting with him. It was a very rainy and windy day, but the king in his own old sheepskin cloak cared nothing for the weather, and he led them full gallop over the country, till the fine silk cloaks were wet through, and the furs torn and spoilt. When they came home, he would not let them change their clothes, but made them dry themselves by the fire as well as they could. Next day he ordered them to appear at court in the same dresses, and it may be imagined how beggarly they looked; their silk cloaks puckered with wet, stained with mud, and

the fur trimmings torn and shrivelled. Charlemagne pointed them out to the rest of the party, saying: "What a tattered company I have about me! while my sheepskin, which I turn this way or that, as suits the weather, is none the worse for yesterday's wear. For shame! learn to dress like men, and let the world judge of your rank by your own worth, and not by that of your clothes."

As we represented Charlemagne's court on a day of ceremony, we dressed very tidily. Charlemagne received the caliph's clock with great dignity, and his courtiers looked very respectable. At one time we had had a great mind to act the ragged scene, but then we must have given up the Oriental dresses, and, after some discussion, the turbans carried the day against the rags.

After the charade was finished, William said he thought it strange that clocks should have been known to the Arabs, and brought into France in the time of Charlemagne; and yet seventy years later, Alfred the Great in England was obliged to burn candles to mark the time.

"Charlemagne's clock was very unlike our notion of a clock," said his father. "It was what is called a clepsydra, or water-clock: it was worked by water dropping from one part to another. It had twelve little knights guarding twelve doors; and at the beginning of each hour, one of the knights opened his door, and struck the time on

a bell. At the next hour, the second knight opened his door and struck *his* bell; and so on through the twelve."

"Did the Arabs invent clocks, uncle?" asked Lucy.

"I believe so; at that time they knew more of mechanics than all Europe put together."

"When were clocks first brought to England?" said Matilda. "I am ashamed to say I am more ignorant than my youngest cousins about such matters."

"You would be more learned than your oldest cousins, if you could answer that question," replied Uncle Harry. "It is impossible to say when they were really first introduced. The earliest clock of which there is any account in this country, was put up in 1288, on a building called the Clock-House, in Westminster, for the use of the lawyers. They thought a great deal of it; and in the reign of Henry the Sixth it was put under the special charge of the Dean of St. Stephen's, who had a salary of sixpence a day for taking care of it."

"Sixpence a day for a Dean!" exclaimed Mary, laughing.

"Sixpence was worth more then than it is now, you know, Mary," said William.

"Yes, I forgot," said Mary. "But was nobody better paid than that?"

"Sometimes," said Uncle Harry. "When

William of Wykeham was building Windsor Castle, Edward the Third paid him a shilling a day when he was living in the place, and two shillings if he came from a distance."

Mrs. Mortimer joined in the laugh at this, and said she thought Mr. Wyatt would have been very much surprised if George the Fourth had offered him such a salary for making the restorations.

"I suppose everything they had to buy was cheap in proportion," said Henry.

"Certainly," replied his father. "We could scarcely feed a dog now for what Edward the Second thought a handsome allowance for his leopards."

"Did he keep leopards?" said Mary. "What did he do with them?"

"He looked at them in their cages, I suppose, just as you might do. They were kept in the Tower of London; and, till within the last few years, there was always a menagerie in the Tower. I used often to go and see the wild beasts there when I was a boy; but they are now removed to the Zoological Gardens, and I suppose the keeper would be very glad if he could feed them and himself at King Edward's price; sixpence a day for the leopards' food, and three half-pence a day for the keeper's."

William asked if Edward was the first king of England who kept wild beasts.

"No," replied Mr. Percy; "I do not know

who was the first, but they were the fashion long before Edward's time. Henry the First had a menagerie of lions, lynxes, and porcupines; and an elephant, which had a house to himself in the Tower."

"Do you think he had a giraffe, or a chimpanzee?" asked Edward.

"No: those animals were not yet discovered; but he had a white bear, which seems to have been rather a favourite, by the care which the king took of him. He was allowed fourpence a day for his food; and, when he chose to amuse himself by fishing in the Thames, he was held by a rope, to keep him from falling into the water."

At this all the children laughed, except Henry, who seemed doubtful whether to take it in joke or in earnest. At last he exclaimed, "I wonder how such a story found its way into history."

"The bills and accounts of public offices were preserved with great care," replied Mr. Percy, "and in course of time became valuable from giving a good idea of former prices. Of late years much attention has been paid to these old account books, and we learn much that is curious from them."

"You ladies would have found the old prices very convenient in housekeeping," said Uncle Harry. "In Edward the First's time a pair of fowls cost three half-pence; a fat goose, twopence half-penny; a crane, a shilling; and a swan, three shillings."

"I should find the prices much more convenient than the things themselves," Mrs. Mortimer replied. "I should be rather puzzled to know what to do with a swan or a crane when it came home from market. Were such creatures really eaten? How tough they must have been!"

"There were very good recipes for cooking them. A crane was roasted; but they stewed a swan till it was quite tender, and then 'pyket out his bones,' as their old cookery books say, and dressed it with vinegar and spice. It was not considered *comme il faut* to serve more than one crane or swan at a time in a dish, and perhaps you may think that too much; though then it was 'a dainty dish to set before the king.'"

"Notwithstanding all your boasting of the cheapness of former times," said Mr. Stanley, "some things are much cheaper now. Dress, for instance: the most extravagant man in the world could not contrive to spend a hundred pounds in a coat, as they did in those days."

"And postage," said Mrs. Percy. "Our ancestors would have been more surprised at our penny postage than we are at their two-penny geese. How much would it have cost, in the Plantagenets' time, for us to send our letters to Mr. Stanley, when he is at his house in Yorkshire?"

"Three and sixpence," Uncle Harry replied; "that is to say, half a guinea of our money; one of their shillings was worth three of ours."

"You and I, Lucy, should not have been such good correspondents if we had lived in those days," said Caroline.

"*I* am very glad we did not," she replied; "in spite of all Willy says."

William took no notice of this observation, but contrived to bring the conversation round to his favourite subject.

"I want to know something more about the clocks, father," said he. "Did not the monks use them first?"

"No doubt they did. About the eleventh century, clocks moved by weights began to be used in monasteries, but they seem to have been rude and imperfect, and the records of convents contain very minute directions for regulating them. These clocks pointed out the hour, but whether they struck of themselves, or were struck at certain times by the sacristan, we do not know."

Caroline asked whether *watches* had not been invented much later?

"Not till the sixteenth century, I believe," her father replied.

"I should like to have for my own the oldest watch that ever was made," said William. "I wonder what it was like?"

"A precious clumsy thing, I dare say," said Arthur.

"The first watches were not so clumsy as those that were made about a hundred years ago,"

Uncle Harry answered: "but they were not such pretty, delicate little things as ours. They were made in the shape of an egg, and often fastened on the tops of walking-sticks."

"When we go back to town, papa," said William, "I should like to hunt well in some of those curiosity shops, and see if I could not find a real old watch, and save up my money to buy it."

"I have no objection," said his father, who encouraged him in his love of antiquities, in spite of occasionally laughing at him.

"The chances are," said Mr. Percy, "that you would be served like a boy your grandfather knew, and perhaps not be so sharp in suspecting the trick. This boy was, like you, excessively fond of antiquities, and used to go about examining all the curiosity shops in Edinburgh, and making acquaintance with the shopkeepers. He had a particular fancy for collecting relics of Robert Bruce; and one goldsmith, whose shop he used to haunt, told him that he could show him a watch which had belonged to Robert Bruce himself. Day after day the boy came to see it, but for a long time it was not forthcoming. At last the goldsmith produced a very clumsy battered old watch, with an inscription on the dial-plate, 'Robertus B. Rex Scotorum.' At first, the boy was very much taken with it, but upon closer examination he suspected a trick, and would have nothing more to say to it. After a time, the

goldsmith sold it to some less knowing antiquarian, and he, in his turn, sold it to some one else at a higher price; and so it went from buyer to buyer, always increasing in price, till at last it found its way into the king's collection, and the learned antiquarians of the day wrote dissertations upon it, to prove the invention of watches in the fourteenth century. But, unfortunately for their theories, when the boy was grown up he returned to Edinburgh, and went to visit his friend the goldsmith. While talking over old times, he inquired about the watch, and what had become of it? The goldsmith laughed, and told him that it had been a mere joke of his own, to trick the young collector, who he thought would have been taken in; and that it was nothing but a common old American watch, with the inscription scratched on it by the goldsmith himself. And so all the antiquarians' speculations were upset."

"But now, listen to our own clock, girls and boys," said Mrs. Percy, "striking an hour that girls and boys ought not to hear. Good-night."

CHAPTER VII.

Children's ideas of history—Favourite heroes—The dark ages—The Norman conquest—Mediæval Superstitions—The Cid.

It was a bright morning, cold, clear, and sunny; a pattern for Christmas weather, according to old ideas of Christmas, "frosty though kindly." We were very glad to see it, for there was a great deal to be done, and everybody was anxious to be able to go out. There was no time this morning for arranging charades; the Christmas presents were to be taken to the poor people in the village; the charity-school to be dismissed for the holidays; the rewards given; and Ellen's elaborate flannel petticoat being quite finished, she was going to take it to old Susan herself.

The moment breakfast was over, the whole party set off. Mrs. Percy had a Christmas present for every cottage: shawls for old women, comfortables for old men; blankets, baby-clothes, books; shoes and stockings, gowns, tea and sugar; in short, everything that she knew would be most acceptable: she had taken pains beforehand to ascertain what each person would prefer, as she liked to please them in their own way.

Ellen was made very happy by seeing how much Susan liked the petticoat. She held it up, folded and unfolded it, admired the work and the flannel, and was much inclined to put it on at

once for Ellen's satisfaction. When we left her cottage, Ellen, who had hitherto been no great needlewoman, expressed a determination to like work for the rest of her life. It was now time to go to the school, where she was confirmed in this resolution by the specimens shown by some of the scholars. Such stitching and gathering!—invisible hemming and imperceptible sewing. Their needlework did the greatest credit to themselves, their schoolmistress, and Caroline, who helped to superintend it. Then they showed their copy-books and ciphering-books: Ellen looked at these with particular interest, for she often taught the younger ones arithmetic, as it was her own favourite lesson. Next they read, and the clergyman questioned them. They answered well and sensibly, as if they had listened to what he said, and understood the meaning of his questions; not merely repeating at random any Scripture phrase that came into their heads. We were all very much pleased with the school, and I think the school was very much pleased with us, for every girl who had attended regularly had some reward. Ellen and Caroline supplied many, and their mamma provided the rest. Lucy also had made some pretty work-bags, nicely fitted up, for a few of the children with whom she had become acquainted during her visit to her cousins.

That evening we were so much interested in talking over our morning's occupation, that there

was no thought of charades or any other play before tea. Then Matilda sang to us: when she left the pianoforte, Mrs. Mortimer and Mr. and Mrs. Percy began to discuss the merits of different musicians, and to talk of various methods of teaching music; and from music they went on to other accomplishments, and the children listened, and thought how many things there were to learn.

Lucy was much surprised at hearing us talk of things as amusements that she had always considered as lessons, and very tiresome ones. Ellen did not understand Matilda's complaint that she could not give as much time as she liked to her music. Ellen thought one hour's practice every day very hard work, and rather too much; but Matilda thought three hours rather too little. However, even this indefatigable Matilda confessed that music was the only lesson she had hitherto liked; but she meant for the future to be more industrious, and try to improve herself by reading.

"I do not know how it is," said her mother, "but I have never been able to make my children take any interest in history; yet I am sure they have not been over-dosed with it. They have never been wearied with any long books, for I have only made them read the very easiest abridgments."

"My dear sister," said Mr. Percy, "that quite

accounts for their disliking it. Abridgments and epitomes are the dullest things in existence. If you wish children to be fond of history, give them plenty of details, however trifling, and let them enter into the spirit of the times they read about."

"I wonder," said little Mary, "*how* people write books of history; I cannot imagine how they know all the things that happened so long ago."

"How do you suppose?" said Uncle Harry; "give us your idea of a historian, Mary: how do you think he would set to work?"

"I think children's books of history must be made out of grown-up people's."

"No doubt. And grown-up people's?"

"I suppose they must be made out of older ones still: those that were printed before."

"Well, and before those? Before there were any printed books?"

"I am sure I don't know."

"Oh, Mary," exclaimed Ellen, "you know there were manuscripts, *written* books."

"Oh, yes, I forgot that. But were manuscripts histories?"

"Many of them were," Uncle Harry replied. "Numbers of persons wrote the chronicles of their own times. But there are also other ways of finding out what happened in former days."

"Are there?" said Mary, looking rather puzzled.

"I am afraid they are beyond your discovery. Can *you* think of any, Ellen and Lucy?"

Ellen and Lucy were as much at a loss as Mary. Caroline supposed it would be by poetry, ancient ballads, and the like. She knew that minstrels used to sing about great events, and she thought people would probably remember such poems, and teach them to their children.

"Very right," said Mr. Percy and his brother, both together. "What more?"

"Monuments and coins," said William.

"True. What else?"

"Things that belong to battles and massacres," cried Arthur. "The flags that hang up in churches. Even in the Prayer Book there is all about Gunpowder Plot."

"What more?" asked his father, laughing.

"I know," exclaimed Henry. "Public documents, laws, constitutions, and decrees: those are all a part of history."

"And a very great part, too," said uncle Harry. "But besides all those grander sources, there are memoirs and private letters of persons who might be of no great note, and who wrote about matters of no particular importance, but their letters are valuable now, because they tell about the customs and ways of thinking of that day."

"I believe," said Mr. Percy, "children think history is a mere record of the succession of

kings and queens, the battles they fought, and the executions that took place in their reigns."

"I think they have rather a better notion of it than that," Mrs. Percy observed. "Most children have their favourite hero to whom they look up with great enthusiasm, and for whose sake they will read eagerly the history of his time."

"Who is your favourite hero, Mary?" asked her father.

"Robert Bruce is mine," she answered.

"And the Marquis of Montrose mine," said Ellen.

"And Cœur-de-Lion mine"—"And Gustavus Adolphus mine"—"And Madcap Harry mine"—"And Alfred the Great mine," exclaimed one after another.

"I wonder what idea they have of the history of any particular period," said Mr. Harry Percy.

"Suppose you try," answered Mrs. Percy. "Who will be examined in history by Uncle Harry?"

"I will"—"and I"—"and I"—was heard on all sides.

"Well," said he, "what epoch shall we have? Choose for yourselves."

"I should like to be examined in Henry the Eighth," said Edward, "because I know about *him*."

"What do you know about him, my little man?"

"I know he had eight wives, and cut off all their heads," replied the little boy very solemnly.

Uncle Harry laughed at Edward's mistake, and said he should be happy to hear their account of the reign of Henry the Eighth, if they pleased; but Caroline exclaimed, "Oh, no; do let us have the Dark Ages?"

"Why are they called the Dark Ages?" Lucy asked.

Without giving his uncle time to speak, Henry answered, "Everybody knows that, Lucy. Because the people who lived then were so shockingly ignorant and stupid."

"Don't believe him, Lucy," William eagerly exclaimed; "there were more great, and good, and learned men then than there are now, and people were altogether better."

"Which of them is right, Uncle Harry?" asked Lucy.

"Neither of them," he answered. "Both their opinions are prejudices. There were, as William says, many great and good men; but people in general were much less educated than they are now; and though they had great reverence for religion, the superstitions which were mixed up with it injured their minds, and often caused them to mistake wrong for right. Now, what part of the Dark Ages will you have? We cannot go through the history of eight centuries.

"I have often heard of the Dark Ages," said

Ellen, "and I like them, because the name sounds so awful; but I don't know when they were."

"When do you suppose?"

"I thought they were when everybody prayed to the saints, and bought indulgences," said Lucy, as Ellen did not seem very ready with an answer.

"Was that when they were all Roman Catholics?" asked Edward.

"Yes: but when was that?" said Uncle Harry.

"I suppose when the Pope turned out the bishop of Rome," said Ellen, jumbling together her recollections of church history.

Lucy's ideas were no clearer than Ellen's; but Henry and Caroline understood something of the principles of the Reformation, and knew a few facts connected with the history of the Papacy. They knew, for instance, that Gregory the Seventh was the first Pope or bishop of Rome who had claimed the right of deposing kings; and that the different errors of the church of Rome had crept in by degrees; that there had often been people to oppose them at the time, but that superstitions had taken root, one after another, till they became too bad to go on any longer.

"Was it not the sale of indulgences that brought on the Reformation?" asked Henry.

"That happened to bring matters to a crisis," his uncle answered. "But people's eyes had begun to be opened to the corruptions of the church long before. The Reformation was in fact brought about

by the revival of learning. When people discovered what the ancient church had really been, and how unlike it they had become, they set to work to clear off abuses, and put matters to rights."

"When did the Dark Ages begin and end?" Lucy asked.

Caroline could answer this. She knew that what are commonly called the Dark Ages, and the Middle Ages, had lasted from about the sixth or seventh century till the fourteenth.

"Why then," exclaimed Ellen in great amazement, "Alfred the Great lived in the Dark Ages!"

"To be sure he did," said her uncle: "and Cœur-de-Lion, Robert Bruce, William Wallace, and plenty more of your favourite heroes. But who knows why their times are called the *Middle* Ages?"

None of the children could answer this question, so Uncle Harry explained the matter.

"There are two great divisions of history," said he, "Ancient and Modern. The ancient world broke up completely in the fifth century; but the modern state of things did not fairly begin till the fourteenth. People find it convenient to have a separate name for the intermediate centuries, which are therefore called the Middle Ages. But now, whose times shall we choose?"

They chose the period of the Norman Conquest. I will not repeat at length all that was said, the questions that Uncle Harry asked, and that the

children answered, or could not answer, but only give a general idea of the conversation.

He made them find on the map the dominions of William the Conqueror, both in England and Normandy. He told them of the languages that were spoken in England, the Saxon and the Norman French; and the remains of both to be found in our own English. He told of both the good and bad laws made by William the Norman, with many curious stories of the time; and astonished Lucy by saying, that those were not half that there were to be told. He said a great deal about the state of religion; how many heathen superstitions were then mixed up with it; how the clergy were obliged to preach to Christian people not to worship particular trees, nor to believe in charms and talismans, nor to invoke Minerva to help them in their needlework, nor to keep holy particular days in order to be delivered from moths and mice. He also told them of the belief in fairies and goblins, magicians and witches.

"Did grown-up people really believe in fairies?" asked Lucy.

"I am ashamed to confess they really did. Sometimes they thought the fairies were good-natured and useful; but in general they looked upon them as a spiteful race, particularly fond of killing cows, and riding farmers' horses to death; and the poor ignorant people used to endeavour to propitiate them by offerings and many foolish customs. The

clergy used to preach against all this nonsense; but unhappily they encouraged other superstitions, which gradually became a part of religion."

"Of what kind, uncle?" asked Arthur.

"Such as the worship of saints, and pilgrimages to their shrines. Among other things, the people fancied the saints would protect them from the fairies. They even assigned to each saint his own particular department. Saint Bartholomew kept off thieves; Saint Peter took care of the churns; Eloy's prayer cured sick horses, and so on."

"You do not seem to think those times were so good as William makes them out, uncle," said Henry.

"No," replied their uncle. "William as yet sees only one side of the question. He is still so much delighted with his new line of reading, that he forgets, or does not know, all there is to be said on the other side. He must read a great deal more yet."

The children were surprised to find how many celebrated persons had lived at the same time: William the Conqueror; Pope Gregory the Seventh; that hero of Spanish history, the Cid; Mahmoud of Ghizni only a few years earlier, &c. Ellen, Lucy, and Arthur had never heard of the Cid. Uncle Harry told them, that, when Spain was divided between the Moors and the Christians, Rodrigo Diaz was a Christian hero renowned for his wisdom and valour. He conquered five

Moorish kings, and afterwards gave them their liberty, and treated them with such generosity and kindness, that they swore allegiance to him, and gave him the title of their Cid, or Lord. Thus the Cid, though only a subject, came to have more power than the kings of Spain themselves; for the knights of France and Italy were willing to serve under his banner, and he might have obtained the kingdom of Castile for himself; but he was loyal to his master, king Alphonso, and always helped him against his enemies.

He was going on, but Mary began to yawn; and Uncle Harry said, "This has been quite an evening of lessons; suppose now we have a charade."

"By all means," said Mr. Percy; "let us have a good charade to relieve our minds: run away, and prepare it."

CHAPTER VIII.

ALFRED—Elves in the "Midsummer Night's Dream"—POMPEII —MONTROSE—Ancient tenures—Battle of Inverness.

"I WISH," said Mary, when they returned to the school-room, "we could act Alfred the Great. My favourite Alfred!"

"Why not!"

"Because we cannot think of any way of making him into a charade. Al-fred—how can we manage it? What could we do for Al?"

"We need not keep to Al," said William; "we may manage it another way. Papa showed me one day an old translation of the grant to the monastery, which Alfred founded in the Isle of Athelney, and in that his name was spelt in three different ways; Alfred, Ælfred, and Elfred."

"Elf, then; that will just do, and I will be the elf."

I thought this such a make-shift, that I tried to persuade them to give up Alfred altogether, and find some better word; but they were determined upon it, and said that people must put up with a bad syllable for the sake of such an important character; so I let them have their own way with their elf.

"What is an elf?" asked Edward.

"A sort of fairy," Mary replied; "a kind of merry, mischievous fairy."

"They need not be mischievous," said Caroline; "we might have Collins' quiet elves, 'who slept in buds the day.'"

But sleeping elves were not in Mary's line. I proposed a dance of fairies in Windsor Forest, with the queen giving her orders.

> "About, about:
> Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out," &c.

But we decided upon the best of all elves, Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, and part of the dialogue in the "Midsummer Night's Dream."

Mary and Ellen, fancifully dressed up with wings and garlands, were very good elves or fairies. Their wings were made of large sheets of paper, folded into fans, and mounted on a piece of pasteboard, which was tied on their shoulders.

Enter a fairy; and presently afterwards, Puck.

Puck. How now, spirit! whither wander you?

Fairy.
Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough briar,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander every where,
Swifter than the moones sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.

Puck. The king doth keep his revels here to-night;
Take heed the queen come not within his sight.

Fairy. Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite,
Called Robin Goodfellow: are you not he,
That fright the maidens of the villagery;
Skim milk; and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;

And sometime make the drink to bear no barm;
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
Are you not he?

Puck. Thou speak'st aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.

The next scene required no other preparation than to conceal Arthur under the pianoforte.

Enter a party walking in bonnets and cloaks, and one of the ladies in a very bright *red* shawl.

"What a pleasant meadow this is," she remarked.

"Yes; but few people walk here, because there is a bull in it."

"Oh! do you think he will come after us?"

"I dare say he will, because of your shawl;" (touching it, to draw the attention of the company to the colour.) "Bulls particularly dislike that colour."

At this moment a faint and distant bellow issued from under the pianoforte.

"But does the colour really matter?" asked the wearer of the red shawl in some alarm.

The bull himself answered this question by a tremendous roar: he was evidently advancing, and the party took to their heels, exclaiming,—"Oh, here he is coming! Take off that horrid coloured shawl—throw it away," &c.

ALFRED.—Of course they acted the well-known story of his burning the cakes in the neat-herd's cottage, and the goodwife scolding him.

Hackneyed as it was, nothing pleased the children so well. I proposed his listening to his mother's songs—his visiting the Danish camp in disguise —his studying by the light of his candles—his going with his queen to lay the first stone of the monastery in Athelney;—but they returned unanimously to the burning of the cakes, and Miss Aikin's version of it; and Ellen, as the neatherd's wife, called William, "You oaf! you lubber! you lazy loon!" with hearty indignation.

The word was guessed, though the spectators agreed in objecting to the first syllable.

"Have we time for another charade, mamma?" asked Caroline.

"Yes; two or three more, if you make haste."

Away they ran, and presently reappeared in oriental dresses, walking in a pompous procession. Little Edward was carried in a chair, surrounded by his attendants: Henry and Arthur marched before him as heralds, proclaiming his titles:—

"His most celestial majesty Slofun, Emperor of Tagrag, brother of the Sun, father of the Moon, cousin of the Stars, and uncle of the Comets!"

This was the first syllable, POMP.

We then had a school; Henry, as schoolmaster, examined his scholars in the fifth declension.

"How do you distinguish the declensions?"

"Please, sir, by the genitive case singular."

"What is the sign of the fifth declension?"

"Please, sir, I don't know."

"Very foolish boy; go down to the bottom of the class. Next boy—What is the sign of the fifth declension?"

"Please, sir, in *i*."

"Very bad boy: go down. Next?"

"The genitive case singular ends in *orum*, *arum*, *orum*."

And so on; all giving very stupid answers, and pretending not to know the genitive case singular of the fifth declension. Henry ordered them off to learn their lessons better; and we perceived that the syllable must be EI.

Scene the third.—A party seated, enjoying the pleasant evening air. Before them stood a small table, on which were one or two of the vases made by Wedgwood, in imitation of those found in Pompeii. The company were dressed in drapery made of shawls and scarfs, with white ribands tied round their heads for fillets. They talked of their beautiful and flourishing city, the bright sky over their heads, and the blue water at their feet. They said it was long since the mountain had done any mischief; it seemed now to have become perfectly quiet; there would be no more danger from it. Vesuvius would be for the future only a fine feature in their landscape.

"But what said the oracle this morning?" asked Caroline of Henry, who was dressed in a

purple scarf to represent the Pontifex Maximus of Jupiter.

"The oracle," replied Henry, in a loud voice, "the oracle has promised to this fair city as many more years as have passed since it took its name from the triumphal pomp of Hercules."

Suddenly one of the party started, and said he heard a strange sound. Another looked up, and exclaimed that lava was streaming down the side of the mountain. Others said it would soon reach the city. Others, that torrents of ashes were coming down. They all jumped up, and there was confusion, and hurrying to and fro, a talk of escaping, and saving, some their property, others their lives, as they rushed from the room, and left us to remember the rest of the history.

The next word was MONTROSE.

Scene the first.—The actors pretending to be ascending a mountain. They said it was terribly steep, but they expected such fine views as would repay them for all their fatigue. They described everything they saw as they went on, and quoted poetry applicable to the imaginary scenes that passed before them.

Ellen. "It is warm and pleasant here, while we still remain among the fields and flowers."

Caroline. "Yes, but we must mount higher, though this place is very beautiful.

> 'Boon nature scatters, free and wild,
> Each plant or flower, the mountain's child.

Here eglantine embalms the air,
Hawthorn and hazel mingle there;
The primrose pale, and violet flower,
Find in each cleft a narrow bower.'"

Then they walked on in silence for a time, seeming to climb the steep hill with great difficulty.

Henry. "Now we are out of the region of fields and flowers, and we must enter this forest of pines. How dark and gloomy it is! These really are 'forests ancient as the hills.'"

Lucy. "And now that we have passed the dark forest, and have only barren rocks to climb before we reach the snow, let us look back and see all we have left at our feet."

Mary. "Or let us look still higher, at that great mountain just before us. It seems the king of them all."

Caroline. "That is Mont Blanc. Do you know the song of the spirit of Mont Blanc?

'Mont Blanc is the monarch of mountains,
They crowned him long ago,
On a throne of rocks, with a robe of clouds,
And a diadem of snow;
Around his waist are forests braced,
The avalanche in his hand;
But ere it fall, that thundering ball
Must pause for my command.'"

"Unless you have any fresh incident to introduce," said Mr. Percy, "you may go on to the next scene; we are quite sure your syllable must be *mount* or *mont*."

The children had heard Mr. Percy and his brother talking of some of the curious tenures by

which lands were held in former times. The tenant was often bound to make some particular annual offering to his landlord, or to perform some unusual service for him, on pain of forfeiting his lease. One manor was held on the condition that when the king journeyed into Gascony, the tenant should accompany him, leading three greyhounds, for as long a time as he could wear a pair of shoes worth fourpence without wearing them out. On another manor, the tenant was bound to go wool-gathering for the queen among the thorns and briers. Several were held on condition of the tenant's presenting the landlord with a rose, or a nosegay, or garland of roses, on Midsummer's day.

Mr. Percy's manor had been formerly held by this tenure of a *rose*, and the children acted the tenant's bringing the offering, and the landlord's receiving it, with due ceremony.

The third scene represented one of the many stories of the bravery and readiness of *Montrose*. The children had doubted between the battle in which he and his Irish troops, almost unprovided with arms, rushed upon the Covenanters' army, attacked them with volleys of stones, and gained a complete victory,—and the battle of Inverness, in which, by his manœuvring, he defeated an army double the number of his own. On this occasion he concealed his small number by dividing his army into two wings, and contriving

a sham main body by hiding a few men behind trees and bushes, so as to give the enemy the idea that there was a large number to support him: he then rushed furiously with one of his wings upon his adversaries, and drove them back before they had time to perceive how easily they might overpower him. We chose this scene, and my readers may imagine the arranging the army among the furniture; the peeping out from behind the chairs and sofas; the few determined men under the table; Montrose's furious rush from behind the pianoforte, and the complete rout of the adverse army. It was acted with spirit, and easily guessed.

CHAPTER IX.

Comparing ancient and modern history—A game of Blindman's Buff.

We were now obliged to give up our charades for some days. First came Sunday, then Christmas-day; after that Mr. and Mrs. Percy were engaged with company, and dined late; and the grown-up people were not inclined to join in the play in the evening. The children might certainly have acted by themselves, but they preferred waiting till we were able to attend to them; and meanwhile spent their time in very elaborate preparations to surprise us on the first leisure evening. Besides working hard at their dresses, they looked through all the books of history in the house for subjects to act. Often the best stories could not be brought into charades; many an adventure that pleased them in reading, was hopeless for acting, and sometimes, after a whole morning's work, they had not fixed upon a single word. Lucy said they lost their time sadly; but I did not agree with her, for they learned more real history in reading for their own amusement than they had ever done in their lessons; and what was still better, they learnt to understand and enter into the pleasure of searching for historical details and anecdotes. Uncle Harry was always appealed to in their difficulties, and the

merits of many a hero awaited his decision till he could be hunted up from the library or drawing-room.

One morning they were discussing very earnestly what country and what period furnished the most amusing history. Their opinions on this subject had been continually changing for some days past; but just now William was for England and the Plantagenets; Ellen for Scotland and Robert Bruce; Caroline for France and "*François Premier, plus grand que son malheur;*" Mary for later times and "Bonnie Prince Charlie;" while Henry and Arthur scouted the idea of modern history, as not to be compared with that of ancient Greece or Rome. Henry stood up for Greece and Leonidas, Arthur for Rome and Camillus, each of the girls defended valiantly her own hero, and the dispute was carried on so eagerly and so loudly, that the noise soon attracted uncle Harry to the room. Standing outside the door for a minute, he heard one saying, "The Scotch beat the English when Robert Bruce was king;" and another screaming, "Francis the First was much better than Henry the Eighth;" and another whining, "Oh, my dear Pretender!" while William was repeating, "Plantagenets, barons, monks, abbots, chronicles," as if he was reading off some historical dictionary. Henry was spouting Greek poetry, to which nobody listened, and asking between

every two or three lines, "What's Shakspeare to that?" while Arthur bawled out, "Camillus, Fabricius, Scipio," till my ears could scarcely stand it. As soon as uncle Harry peeped in, he was seized upon, and required to decide the question. His first step was to enthrone himself in state to judge the cause, and he unconsciously seated himself on the very chair under which Henry had just before hidden little Edward, in order to show his cousins how the ancient priests concealed themselves to utter oracles. The chair had a loose chintz cover, which completely prevented Edward from being seen; and he sat very quietly, and considered being hidden there as a great joke.

As soon as uncle Harry had obtained a hearing, he said, "You are like the French Chambre des Députés, the members of which made such a row that they got the nickname of the Chambre des *Disputés*. What have you all been raving about? Let me hear what you each want to prove."

"We want to know, uncle, which were the best times of all, and who was the greatest king, and which is the most amusing history."

"Those are three different questions that have very little to do with each other. I am a staunch John Bull, and I look upon Queen Victoria as the best of sovereigns, and her reign as the best time. But as to which is the most amusing his-

tory, that depends partly on your particular taste, and partly on how much you know about it. The more you know of any history, the more amusing you will find it."

"But do you really believe, uncle," said Henry, "that any reading could make one find those Gothic barbarians as amusing as ancient Greece or Rome?"

"Oh! Henry," exclaimed Lucy, "I am sure the knights and warriors were a hundred times better than those nasty ungrateful Athenians, who never had a great man among them without being jealous of him, and banishing him."

"And in the Roman history," said Caroline, "how tiresome all those quarrels are between the patricians and plebeians."

"But," argued Arthur, "the characters in ancient history are so grand!"

"So they are," said Mary; "but that is just why I think them dull. They are so grand, and fine, and long ago, that they never seem to be human beings like us. There are no pretty stories; one cannot fancy that there ever was a Roman or Grecian child of my age."

"Well," replied Arthur, "what more do you know about children in Gothic times? One never reads anything about *them* till they turn out knights in full armour; and I am sure there are more pretty stories in ancient history than in any other, if you do but take the trouble to look

for them in proper books. All the fun that Cyrus had when a boy, for instance."

I rather wondered at Mary's thinking there were no pretty stories in ancient history, because it seemed to me particularly to abound in what children think pretty stories; that is to say, those in which the interest is concentrated on one object.

"Our Roman History," said Caroline, "begins with a Dissertation on the Constitution of the Roman Republic, and Mary finds that dull."

"I dare say she does, poor child," observed uncle Harry. "Who teaches her history?"

"I do, now," Caroline answered. "When mamma began Ellen's Italian, she said I was to hear Mary read history."

"You must not expect her yet to like a dry dissertation on government and politics," said uncle Harry: "let her skip all that till she is older, and begin the story at once, and she will soon change her mind about its dulness."

"I think," observed William, "that the people in modern history seem more real and alive, and more like our acquaintances, than the ancients; and I think the reason is, that we cannot enter so well into the feelings of heathens as of Christians."

"True," said his father; "and if I were to fix upon the part of history most interesting to me, I should find it in the progress and changes

of the Christian Church—Ecclesiastical History, as it is called. An old writer tells us that 'History is the true study for a gentleman;—British History for an Englishman—Church History for a Christian!' But I still return to what I said at first: whatever you study most you will like best, and find most interesting; and when you come to read more, you will find in all times stories of all kinds, simple enough to please Mary, and grand enough to satisfy Arthur; and the histories of heroes, even when they were children, and little incidents that make us feel as well acquainted with them as if they were our next door neighbours. And now, if you are satisfied for the present," he continued, pushing back his chair, "who is for a game of Blindman's Buff?"

A loud howl from under the chair reminded us of little Edward, who was tumbled over by the unexpected movement of his uncle, and in the confusion of his ideas took this for part of the Delphic ceremony.

"Halloo! What is this? What have we here?" exclaimed uncle Harry.

"O-o-o-h! Let me out! I'll never be an oracle again. Help me out! I don't want to be an oracle any more; I want to play at blindman's buff."

"*You* an oracle!" said uncle Harry, lifting the chair off him. "You howl like a Pythoness cer-

tainly; but come out of your hole, Mr. Oracle, and play. Now, who will be blinded?"

"Oh you, you, uncle Harry!" exclaimed several at once. "You are the best blindman of anybody, because you never know whom you have caught."

"No, to be sure: if people can sometimes scarcely believe their eyes, what are they to do blindfold? But here is a handkerchief, who will blind me?"

"Tie him up tight, aunt Esther; he is not to be trusted; he will always peep if he can."

"Now I am quite safe, not a glimpse of day:
Turn round three times and catch whom I may.

"Oh! somebody slipped through my fingers—I thought I was sure of a prisoner then. Ah, here is one at last! No, you cannot escape. Let me see—no, let me feel, I mean, I cannot see.—Here are some curls—this is a heroine of modern history, and, I suspect, a very great Jacobite; one who would 'die for Prince Charlie.'"

Uncle Harry, knowing that he never found anybody out in the usual way, was in hopes of taking the children by surprise, by attacking them on their favourite subjects, but his prisoner was too cunning to speak, and only shook her head.

"Ah! I see you cannot deny it," said uncle Harry. "I am sure it is Mary."

"No, wrong, wrong! It is not Mary; and it

is not a Jacobite at all. I am for William of Orange, and the glorious Revolution, like Papa;" cried Lucy.

"I must try again."

"Oh, take care! keep out of his way. Hush! hush! don't let him hear our voices."

All crept about very silently, but uncle Harry crept about too, and his long arms seemed to reach over half the room. Henry said he was like the giant Polyphemus catching the companions of Ulysses; and Arthur, drawing his illustration from still more remote antiquity, compared him to the hundred-handed Briareus, laying about him on Mount Olympus.

We all avoided him for a long time, but he secured his victim at last.

"Now I know what I am about: Ancient History under my hands here, to a certainty."

William only growled faintly.

"But is it Greece or Rome? Athens, Sparta, or Rome under the Cæsars? Greece! I decide for Greece. Socrates himself! Henry!"

"No, no; worse and worse! It is William, your own son."

"And the most determined partisan of the Gothic Ages among us all," I added.

"It does not answer to rush into any subject blindfold, I find," said Uncle Harry. "I wish I might prosecute my historical researches with my eyes open."

"No, no; do not put your hands near your handkerchief. Keep blind."

"I thought I heard the door open. It would not be fair to go out of the room, and leave me here alone, groping among the Dark Ages. Are you all here?"

"Oh yes; the door only opened to let some one else in."

Matilda had just entered, and before she had time to cross the room, uncle Harry ran against her. He caught her hands, and she held him fast, and made him dance with her, all blindfolded as he was. He was awkward enough, but Matilda contrived to keep him in some order, and turned and twisted him about in a wonderful way.

"Ah," said he at last, "I cannot be mistaken this time; nothing but Modern Paris could have danced in that style. Good-bye to history, classic and gothic, and long-life to the representative of modern fashions—Matilda!"

Matilda was blindfolded, and caught Ellen in no time; and Ellen caught William by the hair, and guessed him before she had pulled much of it out; and we played till we were so hot and tired that we could only sit and fan ourselves till the dressing-bell rang.

CHAPTER X.

Game of "Twenty Questions"—Two modes of playing it—Instances—Difference of tastes—Discussion on Mythology—Hindoo tradition.

One afternoon, while we were sitting round the fire in the twilight, Uncle Harry asked the children if they ever played at the game of *Twenty Questions*. "Oh yes, often," replied Mary. "We are very fond of it: *Animal, Vegetable, and Mineral*, we call it. May we have a game now? Will you play, papa and mamma? and Uncle Harry? and Aunt Esther? and Uncle Stanley? and Aunt Mortimer?"

We were all ready to play, but Uncle Harry stopped us. He said his way of playing the game was rather different from ours. Instead of thinking of a thing that was to be discovered by its properties, we were to think of some person, event, or thing mentioned in history, and find that out by means of the twenty questions. Either one person might think of the thing, and all the rest question him, or the whole company might decide upon the subject, and be questioned by one. The latter mode he considered the best, because a single person could ask a better string of questions, and find out the answer more easily.

"Let us try both ways," said Lucy. "First, all thinking, and Uncle Harry questioning."

"Very well; then I will go out of the room."

We laid our heads together, and presently summoned him to guess.

Uncle H. "Now, I shall ask everybody in turn. Mrs. Percy, have you fixed upon a person, an event, or a thing?"

Mrs. Percy. "A person."

Uncle H. "Mentioned in ancient history or modern?"

Aunt Esther. "In modern history."

Uncle H. "Man, woman, or child?"

Mrs. Mortimer. "A woman."

Uncle H. "Married or single?"

Lucy. "Married several times."

Uncle H. "You need not have told me so much, Lucy. It saves me a question. A private person, or a Queen?"

Arthur. "A Queen."

Uncle Harry. "Was her reign prosperous?"

Henry. "No, quite the contrary."

Uncle Harry. "Was she a queen regnant, or a queen consort?"

Mr. Percy. "Both; but at different times, and over different countries. She is chiefly known as a queen regnant."

Uncle Harry. "Was she good or bad?"

Ellen, with a sigh. "Some people say she was good, and some bad; but *I* think she was good, because I am very fond of her."

Uncle Harry. "Mary, Queen of Scots."

Mrs. Percy. "Quite right; but I think that was rather too easy."

Uncle H. "Well, suppose you let us puzzle you now."

Ellen begged her mamma not to take the trouble of leaving the room; and we agreed that if she would stop her ears, it would be quite sufficient. We could trust to her honour for not listening, or taking any unfair advantage.

When we were ready, we made signs to her that she might remove her hands from her ears.

Mrs. Percy. "Is it general, or specific?"

Mrs. Stanley. "Specific."

Mrs. Percy. "Mentioned in ancient or modern history?"

Arthur. "Modern."

Mrs. Percy. "A person, event, or thing?"

Ellen. "A thing."

Mrs. Percy. "Is it animal, vegetable, or mineral?"

Lucy. "It was made of minerals."

Mrs. Percy. "Now you have told me more than you need, Lucy, and saved my ascertaining whether it is natural or artificial. I now know that it is something made by hands. Was it used for secular or for ecclesiastical purposes?"

Mary. "I don't know what secular means."

Mrs. Percy. "Ecclesiastical means belonging to the church; secular, not belonging to the church."

Mary. "Then this quite belonged to the church."

Mrs. Percy, counting on her fingers: "How many questions have I had? Five; and I have ascertained that it is something specific, mineral, artificial, mentioned in modern history, and used for ecclesiastical purposes. Was it built, or made in any other way?"

Mr. Percy. "It was built."

Mrs. Percy. "Was it a building for use, or a monument in honour of any person?"

Mr. Harry Percy. "It was erected in honour of a particular person."

Mrs. Percy. "Was the person in whose honour it was erected good or bad? Can you answer that, little Edward?"

Edward. "I think he was bad; I don't like him."

Mrs. Percy. "*Him.* A man then. Was he a subject or a sovereign?"

Caroline. "A subject, but a very rebellious one."

Mrs. Percy. "Military, civil, or ecclesiastical?"

Henry. "Ecclesiastical."

Mrs. Percy. "I have been in doubt whether the building erected to his honour was a monument, or a college; but I recollect you said it was not a building for any use except to commemorate him. Was it built during his lifetime, or after his death?"

Matilda. "After his death."

Mrs. Percy. "Then I suppose it must have been the tomb or shrine of some turbulent ecclesiastic whose character is not so much admired now as it was in his own times. In what country was it?"

Aunt Esther. "In England."

Mrs. Percy. "In whose reign?"

William. "In Henry the Second's."

Mrs. Percy. "The Shrine of Thomas à Becket. I suspected it some time ago, but I liked to make sure before I guessed."

Mr. Percy. "Twenty questions seem more than are necessary. You guessed this in thirteeen, and Harry found his out in eight."

Mr. Harry Percy. "They were easy subjects, and we put closer questions than the children would. I dare say they would often want the whole twenty. Now who will go out?"

Lucy. "Oh, please let me! I am so fond of guessing."

Henry. "Now let us puzzle her well."

Aunt Esther. "We must not be too hard upon her. Suppose we have an event this time? What do you think of * * * * * * *?" And here we all began whispering very eagerly, "No, no; yes, yes; that will do."—"Now, Lucy?"

Lucy. "Ancient or modern?"

Esther. "Modern."

Lucy. "Good or bad?"

Mr. Stanley. "Good."

Lucy. "Is it a man or a woman?"

Mrs. Mortimer. "Neither."

Lucy. "Why, it must be one or the other. Oh, perhaps it is a child. Is it?"

Henry. "No, it is not."

Mrs. Percy. "You are wasting your questions, Lucy; why do you not first ascertain whether it is a person at all?"

Lucy. "I quite forgot. Is it a person, an event, or a thing?"

Arthur. "An event."

Lucy. "What a pity! I have lost four questions."

Mr. Harry Percy. "Not quite; you have discovered that it is a good event in modern history."

Lucy. "In what country did it happen?"

Mr. Harry Percy. "In Germany."

Lucy. "Then I can't guess it, because I have not read the history of Germany."

Mr. Stanley. "But you have read this in another history."

Lucy. "Then it belongs to two countries. Which is the other?"

Ellen. "England."

Lucy. "Was it done by one person or a great many?"

Mrs. Mortimer. "By one person."

Lucy. "Was it for his own good, or anybody else's?"

William. "It was for the good of another."

Lucy. "What country was it done in?"

Matilda. "It was done in Germany."

Lucy. "What countryman was the one who did it?"

Caroline. "He was a Frenchman."

Lucy. "What country did the man belong to for whose good it was done?"

Edward. "To England! to England! He was a great Englishman. *I* know *him.*"

Lucy. "I have not the least idea what it is. I shall never be able to find it out. I cannot think of any more questions to ask."

Mrs. Percy. "Consider what you have already discovered, and then you will know better what further questions to put."

Lucy. "I have found out that it was something done by a Frenchman for the good of a great Englishman in Germany. Was the Englishman a king?"

Caroline. "Yes, he was."

Lucy. "Was the Frenchman a king?"

Mr. Stanley. "No; he was a private person."

Lucy. "Did he go to Germany on purpose, or was he there for anything else?"

Mr. Percy. "He went on purpose."

Lucy. "Of what profession was he?"

Aunt Esther. "I am afraid the answer to that cannot fail to tell the whole. He was a minstrel."

Lucy. "Oh, then I know. Richard the First was the English king; and when he was in prison in Germany, the troubadour Blondel went on purpose to look for his prison, and sang under the tower. The event is Blondel discovering Richard the First in prison."

Mr. Harry Percy. "Exactly. Now will you like to try the other way; one person to choose the subject, and all the rest to question him?"

"I wish I might think," said little Edward. "I know a very good thing, if I might go out and think."

"You shall certainly think, my little chicken," Mrs. Percy replied; "but you need not leave the room; you can think as you sit there, only do not tell us your thought."

"I've thought then," he said, smiling, and looking very conscious and important.

Mrs. Percy. "Does it belong to ancient or modern history?"

Edward. "Modern; I don't know any ancient."

Mary. "Is it a person, event or thing?"

Edward. "A thing."

Mr. Harry Percy. "Is it one particular thing, or only any one of the kind?"

Edward. "One particular thing."

Mary. "Was it alive?"

Edward. "Oh, yes; quite alive."

Mr. Percy. "A particular animal mentioned

in modern history. What sort of animal? Bird, beast, fish, or reptile?"

Edward. "It was a beast."

Mrs. Mortimer. "In what country do we hear of it?"

Edward. "In England."

Mr. Stanley. "In what reign?"

Edward. "Edward the Third's."

Arthur. "Did it belong to any famous person?"

Edward. "Yes; to a very famous person indeed."

Ellen. "Was he a king?"

Edward. "No; he never was a king, and I am very sorry for it."

William. "A churchman, or a military man?"

Edward. "A soldier; a great soldier."

Aunt Esther. "Was this animal of his mentioned in peace or in war?"

Edward. "In peace, but after a war."

Mr. Stanley. "Now let us put it all together. A quadruped belonging to a famous soldier in the reign of Edward the Third, and used in time of peace."

Mrs. Mortimer. "Was the quadruped itself noted for anything? Beauty, strength, sagacity, or anything else?"

Edward. "Only for being shabby."

Mrs. Percy. "Well, Edward, I must confess

you have puzzled us all thoroughly. What use was made of your quadruped?"

Edward. "He was used in a procession."

Mary. "Oh, I know! I know! It is the shabby little poney that Edward the Black Prince rode by the side of King John of France, when he brought John prisoner to London. Is not that right?"

Edward. "Yes; that was my thought."

Mr. Stanley. "Now *I* will try your ingenuity in cross-examination. I have thought of something."

Lucy. "Ancient or modern, papa?"

Mr. Stanley. "Ancient: I agree with Arthur and Henry in their preference for ancient history."

Mrs. Mortimer. "I must ask the usual question before we can go any further. Is it a person, event, or thing?"

Mr. Stanley. "A thing."

Caroline. "Animate or inanimate?"

Mr. Stanley. "Inanimate."

Matilda. "What was the use of it?"

Mr. Stanley. "It was used for ornament."

Mrs. Percy. "What kind of ornament? I mean, was it an ornament of dress, or architecture, or what?"

Mr. Stanley. "It was an ornament of dress."

Ellen. "What part of one's dress?"

Mr. Stanley. "Nothing that *you* have on. It was worn as an earring."

Mrs. Percy. "Is it general or specific?"

Mr. Stanley. "Specific."

Mr. Harry Percy. "Then it belonged of course to some particular person. To a man or a woman?"

Mr. Stanley. "To a woman."

Henry. "To a queen, or a private person?"

Mr. Stanley. "To a queen."

Edward. "Was she good?"

Mr. Stanley. "She was decidedly bad. But I am pretty sure, Edward, that you never heard of her, therefore I advise you not to try to guess this time. Listen to the others."

Mary. "Of what country was she queen?"

Mr. Stanley. "Of Egypt."

Lucy. "It must be Cleopatra. I dare say it is her Asp. Is it!"

Mr. Stanley. "No. Now you have had one guess; and remember, only three are allowed."

Henry. "That was a very bad guess, Lucy. Cleopatra never wore the Asp for an earring. Is it mentioned that she wore this earring at any particular time!"

Mr. Stanley. "Yes; at a feast."

Arthur. "Do you know what became of it!"

Mr. Stanley. "It was destroyed."

Ellen. "When? Who destroyed it?"

Mr. Stanley. "Those are two questions. Which shall I answer?"

Ellen. "Who destroyed it?"

Mr. Stanley. "She herself."

Caroline. "When did she destroy it?"

Mr. Stanley. "In the course of the same feast."

Henry. "Oh, then, I guess. The pearl that she dissolved in vinegar to out-do Mark Antony?"

Mr. Stanley. "Yes."

Mary. "What is the story? I don't know it."

Mr. Stanley. "Mark Antony invited Cleopatra to a banquet which was considered as magnificent as possible: but she declared that she would invite him to one that should cost fifty thousand sesterces more. When her guests were assembled, everything appeared exactly the same as at Mark Antony's house, and he protested he could perceive no difference. 'Wait a moment,' she said, 'the feast is not over;' and she took from her ear a pearl worth fifty thousand sesterces, dissolved it in vinegar, and drank it off."

Mary. "What a pity! I do not think anybody would do such a silly thing now."

Arthur. "Well, *I* say it was splendid. Nobody would have the spirit to do it now. People have not grown tired of talking about it for two thousand years, while she might have worn the pearl every day of her life, and nobody have thought anything about it."

Mr. Percy. "See what difference of taste there is in the world, Mary. Now, Arthur, it is your turn."

Arthur. "All right. I've thought."

Henry. "Ancient or modern?"

Arthur. "Ancient for ever!"

William. "Man, woman, child, event, animal, or inanimate thing? I think I have saved a question or two this time."

Arthur. "None of them."

Matilda. "But that seems impossible. Is it fact or fiction?"

Arthur. "Fiction; but I suppose founded upon fact."

Mrs. Percy. "It must be something in the heathen mythology. But do you allow that to be history?"

Mr. Harry Percy. "It is a very doubtful question. Let us put it to the vote. What do you say yourself?"

Mrs. Percy. "I should say no; because it is entirely fabulous. What do you say, Henry?"

Henry. "I say yes; because it has so much to do with ancient history. And you, father?"

Mr. Stanley. "I agree with you; because ancient history would be almost unintelligible without some knowledge of mythology."

Mr. Harry Percy. "And you, Lucy?"

Lucy. "I never knew mythology was anything but foolish stories. I should never have thought it was history."

Caroline. "It seems to me that mythology belongs more to poetry than to history."

Arthur. "I think it is history, because I suppose that most of the characters were real living heroes once, only with fables added to the accounts of them after their death."

Mrs. Mortimer. "I think the religious belief of a people must be considered as part of their history."

Aunt Esther. "It appears to me that their holding such a belief is matter of history, but not the belief itself."

Ellen. "I think history is all true; so I should not reckon any that is not real, history."

Mary. "I do not know anything about it; I have not done mythology yet."

Edward. "Nor I. I don't know what it means."

Matilda. "I would rather hear Uncle Percy's opinion; I cannot make up my mind."

Mr. Percy. "I am against considering mythology to be history for nearly the same reasons that Esther and Ellen have given. History is, or ought to be, a true account of real events; mythology may be *founded* on history, but we know it consists almost entirely of fables."

Mr. Harry Percy. "I vote with you. We know that heroes were worshipped after their deaths; but the stories told about them, that is to say, *mythology*, are not history. Now let us count the votes. Four on your side, Arthur, and seven against you; so you must give up your mythological hero."

"First tell us who it was, Arthur," said Lucy.

"Chiron the Centaur. He was half a man and half a horse; so he was neither man, woman, child, event, animal, nor inanimate thing."

"Oh, was he not an animal? If I had asked you whether it was animal, vegetable, or mineral, you must have said animal."

Arthur. "Yes; I made a blunder there; I only thought of an animal as distinguished from a man."

Mary. "I wonder what could make people think of such a strange creature as half a man and half a horse?"

"*You* can explain that, Henry," said Mr. Percy.

"It was natural enough," answered Henry. "The people of Thessaly were the first who rode on horseback, and their neighbours, never having seen anything of the sort before, fancied the horse and man were all one animal."

"Is that the way mythology began?" said Mary.

"Yes," replied Mr. Percy. "It consists chiefly of fanciful notions of real things. The story of Vulcan, for example. People, at the foot of Mount Etna, seeing the flames bursting from the crater, and hearing awful subterranean sounds for which they could not account, imagined that the unknown power was a god who had especial command over fire. By degrees they invented other circumstances which came to be believed as his real history."

"Did no other nations have fanciful notions of real things?" asked Ellen.

"Yes; the Hindoos, for instance."

"But is their mythology like that of the Greeks?"

"In some measure. But it is less poetical, and contains a number of traditions from other religions, particularly the Egyptian, very childish, and altered to the Hindoo taste."

"Do you know any of those stories, papa?"

"Some of them. Perhaps you would like to hear the story of 'Mahabali,' or 'The Great Bali.' This Bali is said to have been a king to whom the command of the universe was given in reward for the austerities which he had practised. He proved a good sovereign, generous and liberal to his subjects; but he became so proud, in consequence of the immense power given to him, that he looked down with contempt upon all other created beings. He boasted that he would acknowledge no superior in heaven, and no equal on earth, and that his power extended even over the infernal regions. He thought it beneath him to take any notice of the inferior deities, and neglected to make the offerings which they usually received from mortals. They were very angry at losing the honey, melted butter, oil, rice, and fruits, which had always been considered their due, and complained to the god Vishnoo, who promised to redress their grievances. As Bali had cheated them of their rights, Vishnoo determined that he should be punished by being cheated of his own.

"Soon afterwards, Bali gave a banquet at which he displayed all his grandeur. Such magnificence

had never before been seen in the world; but, as usual, Bali insulted the gods by not making the accustomed offerings to them and their priests. In the midst of the entertainment, while the people were prostrating themselves before Bali, and treating him more like a god than a king, there entered a poor dwarf, meanly dressed, who bowed to him, and then stood with his hands joined, as if begging. Bali took pity upon his poverty, and desired him to ask whatever he wished, promising to grant it.

"The dwarf answered that he was a poor Bramin of the name of Bamun, that he had but few wants or wishes, and only begged Bali to give him, out of his vast possessions, as much ground as he could measure with three paces, in order that he might build himself a hut.

"Now the planet Venus was a great friend of Bali's, and seeing him about to be taken in, she good-naturedly came down and whispered in his ear that he had better be careful what he agreed to, for that this Bamun was no other than the god Vishnoo in disguise. Bali felt his danger, but scorned to recal his promise; and he therefore immediately proceeded to ratify the contract in the usual manner, by pouring water over the dwarf's hands.

"No sooner had the water touched Bamun's hands, than his stature began to increase in every direction, and in a few seconds his head reached

the clouds. He now proceeded to measure out the space granted to him. With the first stride he cleared the earth; with the second, the heavens; and the third would have carried him over the infernal regions, but he was stopped by Bali's prostrating himself before him, and resigning the universe into his hands.

"Vishnoo took from him the power that had been too great for him, but left him the infernal regions, in consideration of the generosity he had shown to his subjects."

"I like that story very much;" said Lucy. "But is that mythology? Was Bali ever a real person?"

"Some learned men suppose that he was an ancient king of Cashmere, banished by a conqueror to the lower regions of Hindostan."

"What had that to do with his being sent to the infernal regions?" asked Henry.

"Cashmere is one of the finest countries in the world," replied Mr. Percy, "full of flowers and fruits, cool rivulets, and beautiful scenery: poets say there are no flowers in the world like the roses of Cashmere—

> 'Oh, who has not heard of the vale of Cashmere,
> With its roses the brightest the world ever gave?'

and so on; while Hindostan is intensely hot, with plains of sand extending in some places as far as the eye can reach. The ancient Cashmerians

were very proud of their fine country, called it an earthly paradise, and thought it scarcely possible to live anywhere else, and had the greatest horror of the hot plains of Hindostan.

"After his banishment, Bali seems to have established himself with considerable splendour in India. There exists now, on the sea-shore near Madras, a very fine pagoda, which is all that remains of an ancient city called the City of the Great Bali; and even this is supposed to have been built in remembrance of him, on the site of one still more ancient, over which he actually ruled. There are old traditions of gilded summits of other pagodas having been seen under the waters in former times."

"Some people think that Bali was the son of Nimrod," said Mr. Stanley; "and the same called in Scripture Baal, and worshipped, as you all know, by many idolatrous nations."

By this time we had had enough of our game, and candles being brought in, we went to our several occupations.

CHAPTER XI.

People of the Middle Ages—Their daily life—Roger Bacon—Bishop Greathead — Anecdotes — Ghost Stories — Cicely, Duchess of York, her day—Dolls' Mediæval Dinner Party—John Erigena—The "Intermeat"—The "Silentiary."

"I WISH," said Mary one morning, "we could spend a whole day like people of the Middle Ages; and from the first thing in the morning till the last thing at night do nothing but what we should have done if we had lived then."

"I wonder how we should begin the day," said Ellen; "where is Uncle Harry?"

"Here he is; what do you want with him?"

"Oh, uncle, we want to spend a Middle Age day. How should we begin?"

"First, you must be up very early in the morning. The ladies in those days rose early and went to chapel, hot or cold, wet or dry. How should you like that?"

"We always do get up early; and I suppose their going to chapel was instead of our family prayers. You know we have them every day."

"But with all your alertness, I doubt whether you are up so early as the people of Henry the Second's time. They had a proverb,

'Lever à cinq, diner à neuf,
Souper à cinq, coucher à neuf,
Fait vivre d'ans nonante et neuf.

"But then had they no breakfast? only dinner and supper?"

"They had only two meals a-day; but they made the most of them, and on great occasions, when they did not keep quite to their regular habits, they dined sometimes as late as eleven in the morning. Afterwards they grew more luxurious, and a dinner sometimes lasted from three in the afternoon till twelve at night."

"But don't let us come to the dinner yet;" said Ellen. "We want to know how we are to go on all day."

"Before I can tell you how you should *go on*, I must know what rank you would hold—feudal lords, or vassals. What sort of people do you mean to be?"

"Just what we are now," said Lucy. "We want to know what we ourselves should have done if we had lived then."

"Society was different then. You would not have been in the same condition you are now. People were either nobles or vassals. The middle class of gentry did not exist. But let us see what we can make out for you. When you, Lucy and Henry, were little children, before you settled in Yorkshire, your father was in the army; so I suppose he would have gone to the Crusade, and left you to the care of some relations at home."

"And me, me, Uncle Harry?" said little Edward, bobbing up and down on his chair like an

India-rubber ball; "what should I have been? Should not I have been something?"

"Your father was a physician; so perhaps you might have been adopted by some baron he had cured."

"And all of us?" asked Caroline, Arthur, Ellen, and Mary.

"Oh, you are easily provided for. Your father, with his family estate, would have been a petty baron; and Arthur might have gone to the wars, and you girls would have stayed at home and learnt housekeeping and embroidery; to sing to the lute, and to dance, and probably to read."

"Almost what we do now," said Ellen, in a tone of disappointment.

"But you would have learnt some other things which you do not learn now,—cookery and surgery. All the ladies learnt to dress wounds."

"I dare say that was often wanted. But you and Willy, uncle, what would you have been?"

"I am a lawyer, and I suppose I should have been the same then; but lawyers in those days were often clergymen, and sometimes made ambassadors; so perhaps I might have been a much greater man than I am now. The marriage of Henry the Third and Eleanor of Provence was arranged by a bishop who was a great lawyer. But as clergymen were not allowed to marry, I must have lived all alone, without any Willy and his mamma to keep me company."

"But you *might* have been a lawyer without being a churchman, father," said William; "and then I would have been a student, and a very learned man."

"I wonder whether you would have been the bishop who preached in favour of good grammar, or one of the Oxford students who used to say, *ego currit—tu currit—currens est ego*—which, translated for your benefit, Mary, mean, '*I runs—thou runs—I is running.*'"

"When did those dunces live?" asked Henry in a superior tone.

"In the thirteenth century; and two archbishops thought it worth while to preach against them. But never mind, Willy; you see the archbishops knew better, and there were learned men in the thirteenth century, notwithstanding the dunce party at Oxford. Let us hope you would have been one of the learned ones: perhaps a rival to Roger Bacon himself."

"Or perhaps his friend," said William. "That is what I should have liked."

"You might have been a second Bishop Greathead. He was Roger Bacon's favourite friend, and a very great man, too."

"Who was he? and what did he do?" asked Mary.

"He began life as a poor boy, glad to earn his bread by any hard work; but he was so clever that the Mayor of Lincoln took notice of him,

and put him to school. There he distinguished himself so much that other charitable persons sent him to the university, and he became Bishop of Lincoln, and one of the greatest scholars of his day. But what was still better, he was thoroughly conscientious, and not afraid to withstand both the King and the Pope when they required anything wrong."

"The Pope, too!" exclaimed Lucy. "I thought all the bishops in those days stood by the popes, and rebelled against the kings."

"Not all. There were some who remembered the precept, 'Fear God, and honour the king.' Probably you only know the names of one or two, such as Dunstan and Thomas-à-Becket. But there were often churchmen in England who upheld the rights of the English Church, were loyal to their King, and resisted the usurpations of the Pope; and this Bishop Greathead was one of them. When the Pope sent him bulls requiring anything wrong, he tore them in pieces instead of putting them in force."

"But was not the Pope angry?" said Ellen. "I thought the popes excommunicated everybody who disobeyed them."

"Very true; and the Pope did excommunicate him, but he did not care; he said he made his appeal to heaven. He was so good a man that the English considered him a saint, in spite of the Pope; and he had many friends and admirers

even at Rome, though they dared not openly take his part."

"Did he and the Pope ever make friends again?" Mary asked.

"No; he died soon after; and the Pope wrote to the King of England to desire that his bones might be taken up and disgraced, but the King knew better than to comply with such a request; soon afterwards, when the Pope was in bed, he fancied the bishop appeared to him with an angry countenance, and gave him a hard poke in the side with his crozier. 'You wretch of a Pope!' said he, 'did you mean to disturb my bones, and put a disgrace upon me and the church of Lincoln? What made you so bold? It would have been more becoming for one in your station to pay respect to the bones of an honest man!' I do not know whether the Pope profited by the ghost's lecture, but I know he had a bad pain in his side for several days, and thought he should never be well again."

"But that story cannot be true, Uncle Harry;" said Lucy.

"I think it might, Lucy," he replied.

"But there could not be a real ghost?"

"But there might be a sham one. You know I told you the good bishop had friends in Rome. I have no doubt it was a trick played on the Pope by one of them. There are many stories of tricks of the same kind which took people in at the time."

"Oh, do tell us one!" said Lucy. "I like ghost stories particularly."

"Here is one for you. A company of nuns had once been driven out of their convent, which remained empty for some time. At last there was a talk of establishing a fresh sisterhood in it, but William the Conqueror put a stop to the proposal, and gave the convent and the lands belonging to it to one of his knights. The knight and his companions went down to take possession of the property, and made a great feast, and were very merry; but after he was in bed, the nuns who had intended to inhabit it, came to him dressed up as the ghosts of those who had first been driven out; and they poked him with their crosses, and frightened him so much, that next day he was very glad to give up his estate quietly to the nuns."

"Thank you. But now for our Middle Age day," said Ellen. "Please, uncle, go through a whole day."

"Is it to be in time of peace or in time of war?"

"In time of peace, please. Just such a day as to-day."

"The only description of a lady's whole day that I remember, is in the account of Cicely, Duchess of York, who was mother of Edward the Fourth. She lived in the fifteenth century, which is rather later than the times you mean,

but I recollect no other lady's diary just now. She used to rise at seven, and as soon as she was dressed go to mass. Then home to breakfast, and a pretty substantial breakfast too. No tea or coffee, or thin bread and butter, or crisp toast, or muffins; but good beefsteaks and ale; or on fast days some fish then in season. A conger eel, perhaps, or a slice of porpoise."

"How nasty! But please to go on."

"After breakfast she went to church again. When she came home, perhaps she took a quiet walk on one of the terraces in her garden, attended by her ladies: or if the weather was bad, they might sit and embroider till dinner-time. During dinner, she had a lecturer to read aloud the whole time. After dinner, she received visitors, and transacted any business she had in hand. Next, she took a comfortable nap in her own room. When she awoke, her chaplain visited her for confession or private prayers. Then she came out among her ladies again, and, as her biographer says, 'drank wine or ale at her pleasure.' Then the household all assembled for evening prayers. After that, she and her ladies went to chapel; and when they returned, to supper. During supper they talked about what had been read to them at dinner; and the good duchess was very fond of repeating the lecture to them all over again from memory. After supper she and her ladies amused themselves 'with honest mirth,'

as they said, till bed-time; and by eight o'clock they were all in bed. At least, such was the rule, and the old lady observed it punctually herself."

"There is nothing in all that for us to play at, Lucy," said Ellen.

"No; I do not think we could manage it. Of course we could not play at going to chapel; and if we had to sit and work, or walk in the garden, or listen to reading, it is no more than we do now."

"Well," said Caroline, "if one comes to think about it, they must in reality have done most of the same things we do now, only they did them in rather a different way."

"We do not read at meal-times," Mary observed.

"I will tell you what we can manage," Lucy exclaimed. "Let us have a Middle Age banquet in your baby-house, Mary, for the dolls. The Duchess of Zero can give the feast; you have plenty more dolls for the company, and we will be the servants."

"How many people should we have for guests?" Ellen asked.

"They had large dinner parties in those days," said Uncle Harry; "but I suppose your duchess would not wish to invite quite such a party as the Duke of Milan brought on a visit to Lorenzo de Medici. There were a hundred men-at-arms, five hundred foot-guards, fifty running footmen

dressed in silk and silver, two thousand noblemen and courtiers, including their retainers, five hundred couple of dogs, and innumerable falcons and hawks."

"Oh, that would be far too many. We have not nearly dolls enough. It would take all the dolls in the Pantheon Bazaar."

"Well, then, bring what you have, and make the most of them."

Upon this suggestion they immediately acted. The duchess was turned into a baron for the time being, her daughters into knights, and the other dolls into "gorgeous dames and statesmen old," of all sorts and sizes. All the elegant furniture was removed, and the carpet taken up, to prepare her drawing-room for a banqueting-hall. The boys, of course, would not condescend to play with dolls, but William goodnaturedly fetched a handful of hay from the stable, and Arthur supplied pieces of wood from his workshop; and then they and Henry went after their own amusements; but Uncle Harry said that he was much younger than they, and quite ready to play if he was wanted. In fact, he was always ready for everything. There never was such a playfellow as Uncle Harry. We supposed he might really be a hard-working grown-up gentleman when he was at home; but with us in the holidays he was never too old, or too tired, or too busy for anything. So now it was settled that he should talk for the baron; and

he began by summoning his servants, and desiring them to send for provisions, particularly a good supply of fish. After a little time, I, as one of the caterers, returned to say that there were but three baskets of fish in the market, and that the bishop of the diocese wanted them all; that the baron's servants had had a fight with the bishop's servants, in which several on both sides were wounded; that the mayor at last had interfered, and decreed one basket of fish to each party, and kept the other for the market.

The baron, in a rage, said he would punish the mayor for not deciding entirely in his favour; and ordered a band of retainers to take him prisoner immediately. No sooner said than done. The mayor, a large doll, was brought in, a prisoner between Edward and Mary. Uncle Harry stormed at him for daring to contravene his orders, and commanded that he should instantly be carried "to the deepest dungeon beneath the castle moat!" Uncle Harry frowned so awfully, and looked so tremendously fierce while he pronounced these words in a voice of thunder, that we were quite in fear for the poor mayor's life. However, he came off at last with flying colours, for the town's-people had no idea of allowing him to be ill-treated for doing justice, and came in a body to besiege the baron's castle, and demand their mayor. Their representatives, Ellen, Lucy, and Caroline, made such an uproar, that

the baron was frightened, and brought out the mayor and made friends with him, and ended by inviting both him and the bishop to dinner. The mayor agreed to let the baron buy the third basket of fish, and the bishop sent his for a present: very fine fish they were, particularly the dolphins.

But Uncle Harry said we should want flesh and fowl as well as fish; and he ordered herons, bitterns, cranes, swans, geese, peacocks, pheasants, rabbits, pigs, half a stag, a baron of beef, many kinds of vegetables, particularly cabbages, puddings, plenty of blancmange, and large jugs of ale and wine.

"Are all those birds and beasts to be roasted whole?" I asked.

"By no means. We must have elegant made dishes, and two or three kinds of soup."

"I think," said Ellen, "it seems rather below the baron's dignity to order every separate dish himself. Could not somebody else do that?"

"Nobody else knows what to order;" replied Lucy. "Pretend he is the steward for the present, and we the cooks. What soups will you please to have, sir?"

"A good dish of broth made of pork and gourds; a white soup of almonds and onions; and some pork gruel coloured with saffron."

"What nasty messes those must be!" ex-

claimed Lucy: but Uncle Harry continued giving his orders with the utmost gravity.

"Take care to have plenty of saffron to colour the dishes; and powdered ginger to eat with the roast cranes and herons; a good sauce of garlic and grapes for the rabbits; and ginger syrup for the pheasants."

"And the pigs," cried Mary. "May we have some apple sauce for them?"

"No, no. Take your pig, stuff him with herbs and raisins, then boil him, then roast him well; colour him with eggs and saffron, and then cover him with gold and silver leaf."

"What was the use of the gold and silver leaf?"

"To look pretty, I suppose. They were very fond of gilding their joints. And don't forget the stream of fire from his mouth when he comes to table."

"How is that to be managed?" asked Lucy, who seemed to be the head cook.

"A thin long-necked phial of spirit is to be concealed in the pig's mouth, just before it is brought to table. As soon as the heat of the pig makes the spirit boil, set fire to the vapour. And mind that we have a dish of boiled radishes, several vegetable tarts, and a large custard pudding stuffed full of violets."

"That last sounds more promising," said Caroline: "but what odd mixtures they seem to have used in their cookery."

"Yes. But now I think your dinner is pretty well ordered."

The house was next taken in hand: chopped hay spread over the floor, a long wooden table arranged the whole length of the room, and benches round it. Chairs of the Duchess' were placed at the head of the board for the baron, the bishop, and two or three of the most distinguished guests. When all was ready, a flourish of Edward's tin trumpet announced the arrival of the company. The baron ordered the drawbridge to be lowered, and proceeded to the hall to receive his guests. The dolls were ushered into the banqueting-hall with great dignity. Mary, Lucy, and Ellen arranged them in their proper places, taking care to seat several of the gentlemen on the floor. A plate and knife were given to each person, but of course no fork. Most of the animal food came out of Edward's Noah's Ark, and Mary had boxes of dolls' fruit and vegetables.

"Who is to carve?" asked Lucy.

"The baron himself should carve the principal dish," said Uncle Harry; "and the guests may help themselves to the others. It was sometimes a point of politeness for the master or mistress of the house to carve one dish. The Countess of Warwick held a manor by the service of carving for the King on particular occasions."

The servants were very attentive, helped the

wooden company to carve and eat, and carried on conversation for them to prevent their finding the party dull. As the exact date of the entertainment was not fixed, they introduced by way of conversation any stories they happened to know. The best was one told by Uncle Harry, about John Erigena when dining with King Charles the Bald. Erigena was a learned man, very clever, and full of fun. He was rather small and thin, and a little apt to be greedy. He was sitting at dinner between two remarkably fat priests, and the King sent him a dish containing two large fish and one small one, and desired him to divide them between himself and his two neighbours. John bowed to the King, gravely helped himself to the two large fish, and divided the little one between the priests. "That is not fair!" said they. "No, indeed;" said the King. But John again bowing politely, persisted in its being all right. "Here," said he, showing his own plate and himself, "are two large fish and one little one; and there," pointing to the priests and their plates, "are also two large fish and one little one."

Between the two courses the baron, as was customary, had an "intermeat," a kind of show that used to be exhibited during feasts, and generally consisted of a sham fight by sea or land. One of Edward's little ships was brought in, and soldiers out of the same box were pushed

after it. The attendants knocked them all down with caraway comfits; then ate the sugar-plums in the name of the company, and carried the intermeat away.

The only drawback to the pleasure of the entertainment was its extreme noise. The company and the servants seemed all determined to talk at once; and at last Uncle Harry said that we must establish a *Silentiary*. Edward was accordingly installed in the office, and posted against the wall with a cane in his hand, with which he was to strike it whenever the company became noisy. But he discharged his duty with too great rigour, and struck the wall whenever anybody attempted to speak. The mere suspicion that any one was going to open her mouth, set him hammering; so that he made more noise than they, and stopped all conversation. He was, therefore, by common consent, deposed from his office.

Uncle Harry and I, having other things to do, took leave soon after the entertainment began; but it continued during the whole of that day, and when we went to bed at night, the baron and his guests were still carousing. Next day, Lucy, Ellen, and Mary spent the whole morning in putting things in order and welcoming the return of the Duchess of Zero and her daughters to their comfortable family mansion.

CHAPTER XII.

Value of a good character—Agamemnon—Statue of Memnon—Clytemnestra's Grecian dress—Galileo—William Wallace—Lancaster—A skating party.

The dinner parties were over, the papas and mammas at leisure, and everybody being ready for more charades, Uncle Harry and I were again summoned to the consultation.

"Let us have something from Greece or Rome," said Arthur

"By all means," said Henry; "and let it be a philosopher this time."

"I wonder what you can see to admire in those philosophers," said William. "St. Augustine says they hung up veils before their doors to hide the ignorance that lurked within."

"Not quite so fast, William," interposed his father. "Before the introduction of Christianity the best of the heathens were generally philosophers, and, as far as honesty and just dealing went, they are not to be despised."

"I thought they taught nothing but sophistry," said William.

"They gave good lessons sometimes. There was one who was anxious to impress upon his scholars the value of a good character. With this intention he went down to the market-place

at midnight, and carried away a sheep that was hung up in the shambles. In the morning the sheep was missed, and two of his scholars, young men of indifferent character, were accused of the theft. They were brought before the magistrate, when the philosopher came forward and confessed himself to be the thief."

"Then, of course, the poor scholars got off?" said Ellen.

"No: everybody laughed at the philosopher, and said it was impossible that so good a man could steal. The more he protested, the more they laughed, and said that anybody could see he was only trying to save his scholars. At last he brought the sheep into court, and returned it to the owner. 'Learn from this,' he said to his scholars, 'the value of a good reputation.'"

"Do you know the name of the philosopher?" asked Henry.

"No, I do not; so I am afraid you cannot act him. But I cannot stay with you this morning, as I have an engagement. Good-bye."

"Let us have something from the Iliad," said Arthur, when Uncle Harry was gone. "One of the names we proposed the other day, AGAMEMNON? Aunt Esther, you said that would do, only we had not time to finish settling it."

"But I do not see how we can divide the word," said Ellen. "*Ag* does not mean anything."

"Try Aga," I said. "A sort of petty great

man in Turkey, sometimes the governor of a village. You might have him sitting smoking, surrounded by his attendants."

"Yes; and having them all bastinadoed," exclaimed Arthur. "That is the thing for a Turkish Governor."

"Oh no, Arthur," said Caroline; "do not let us have anything horrid. You know mamma does not like it."

"Well, but she will not mind my *ordering* it. Of course it is not going to be *done?*"

"But what shall we have for *Mem?* Would a very affected, mincing person do, coming in, saying—How do you do, *Mem?* I am delighted to see you, *Mem,*—instead of Ma'am?" inquired Mary, curtseying, putting her head on one side, and acting her own idea, as she spoke.

"Oh no, Mary, we do not want Mem at all," Henry replied. "Memnon, the Egyptian hero, is what we must have, of course."

"Who was Memnon? You fixed upon these words the morning Lucy and I were sweeping the baby-house and washing the dolls' clothes after the banquet, so we do not know about them."

Though Henry had been so ready with Memnon's *name,* we found that he knew nothing more, and could not even tell Mary who he was: so I explained to her that Memnon was a corruption of the name of Amenof the Third, supposed

by some people to have been the very king of Egypt who was reigning when the Israelites took their departure, and who was drowned in the Red Sea.

"But that was Pharaoh!" exclaimed Lucy, Ellen, and Mary all together.

"Pharaoh was his title, not his name. All the kings of Egypt at that time were called Pharaohs, but they had their own names besides."

"Just as the first twelve emperors of Rome were called Cæsars," said Arthur.

When the little girls were satisfied on this point, I told them more about Amenof, and the great statue erected to him.

"Then Moses himself may have seen it," said Lucy. "Think of there being a statue standing now that Moses and the Israelites could have seen! That *is* wonderful."

"But," said the dignified Henry, "do you believe it?"

"I am not learned enough to decide," I answered; "I only tell you that some people suppose it to have been the statue of that Pharaoh, and I do not know that there are any strong reasons against it."

"I am sure *I* shall believe it," said Lucy, "because it is so nice to think of. What is it like?"

I told her that it is an enormous statue, fifty-three feet high, sitting on a throne, with its hands

on its knees. In former times people believed that every morning when the first rays of the sun struck the statue, it gave out a musical sound, and it is therefore known by the name of the Vocal Memnon. "Now," I continued, "we may very easily dress Henry as an Egyptian statue: we will put him in the Memnon's attitude, with a sheet over him, and a white scarf flat upon his head, and hanging down on his shoulders; and I will sit behind him where I cannot be seen, and strike a chord on the guitar."

"That will be famous," said Henry. "I have seen the small Memnon in the British Museum, and I know the position."

"I think we might manage a still better scene, with more acting in it," Arthur observed. "Do not you remember in the History of Rome, that the Emperor Adrian, with his wife and a number of ladies, went to visit the statue of Memnon, to hear the music? We might have them coming to see it, and talking about the sound."

"There is one objection to that. Henry will quite lose his effect as a colossal statue, if human beings of the same size are standing by him. It will answer better to have nothing to compare him with, if we wish him to look gigantic. Now—'Agamemnon, King of Men,' what scene in his life will you have?"

"Oh, don't let us have his life at all: let us have his death. His wife Clytemnestra stabbing

him. You know she gave him a fine tunic with the sleeves sewed together, and while he was trying to put it on, and his arms were entangled in the sleeves, she stabbed him."

"What a wicked creature," said Ellen. "I am sure I will not act *her*."

"Nor I;" said Mary. "Nor I neither;" said Lucy.

"Well then, Caroline will. You will not mind it, Carry?"

"Why really, I would rather not."

"Suppose," said I, "you classical boys act that scene by yourselves. Let Arthur be Clytemnestra; the dressing him up as a lady will be an additional advantage."

"Oh yes!" said Mary; "and he shall have mamma's old pink bonnet and black cloak, or had he better be in an evening dress? Caroline's blue frock with short sleeves; and perhaps as Clytemnestra was a queen, he should have a crown."

"Oh Mary, what wretched notions!" exclaimed Henry. "Surely you do not suppose the Greek ladies of the heroic ages were dressed in bonnets and frocks like you?"

"How were they dressed?"

"They wore tunics, vests, robes, and different kinds of drapery of their own. The way will be for Arthur to take off his jacket, and turn his shirt-sleeves up to his shoulders, and then have a

shawl twisted round him somehow; I dare say Aunt Esther can do it."

"Very easily. I will fold the shawl round him, and fasten the corners on his shoulders with brooches: and he shall have a girdle round his waist."

"I ought to have a veil, and a crown or fillet; do not forget that," said Arthur.

"Those are all ready," I answered: "and now that we have settled Agamemnon, what other words shall we have? There will be time for several. None of Agamemnon's scenes will take long to act."

"I think," said William, "it would be a good way for us to take it in turn to choose the words, because then we might each have our favourite character, and still all consult and arrange. Shall we draw lots for first choice?"

The first choice fell to me, and as we had hitherto dealt only in kings and queens, I ventured to leave the royal line, and to propose the philosopher GALILEO. The word would divide well, but I found that none of the children except William knew his history. They had always cared more about kings and warriors than about learned men. Lucy had learnt to repeat in her lesson of Chronology.

"A. D. 1557. The astronomer Galileo, and the Spanish writer, Cervantes, flourish:"

but she did not know who either of them were,

and had never inquired. I explained that Galileo was a learned Italian who invented the telescope, and made many great astronomical discoveries. The Grand Duke of Tuscany was his friend, and made him Professor of Mathematics, and for a time he pursued his studies in peace; but at last, ignorant people fancied there must be something wrong in his discoveries because they could not understand them, and he was brought before the Inquisition. There he was forced to renounce all his opinions. He agreed to give up his science in order to save his life, but the Inquisitors were not satisfied, and they imprisoned him for many years. When he was released, his eyesight was so injured by the confinement, that he could no longer look through his telescope. When I had finished my story, the boys wished to act his examination before the Inquisition, but Ellen did not like anything so melancholy, and we therefore determined upon showing him looking through his telescope.

It was now little Edward's turn to find a word, and he seemed rather puzzled at having "all" history "before him where to choose," because, as he informed us, he was only as far as Richard the Third. Arthur advised him to act Hercules.

"He had much better be Tom Thumb," said Henry. "Besides, Hercules will not divide; don't put useless words into the child's head."

I reminded Edward of the different heroes of whom he had read in his little history of England; and he said his favourite of all was William Wallace, but that he should not like to be him, even in play, because of having his head cut off.

"Never mind that," said William. "Wallace is a good word. You may be any other character that comes into the story; and any one of us will be William Wallace himself, if you do not like it. *I* am quite ready to act such a hero, with his head or without it."

"It is a very odd thing," said Lucy, "but I think heroes generally come to bad ends. After all their fighting and conquering, they are very apt to have their own heads cut off, or something of that sort. I wonder why that is."

"Because," I replied, "the greatest men have not fought for their own private advantage, but for the rights of their king, or the good of their country, and sometimes the object could not be gained without the loss of their lives. Those great men were ready to lay down their own lives in a noble cause; and often that was the very way they came to be looked upon as heroes.

"Now if you have agreed upon Wallace, draw lots for the next.—It is Ellen's turn. Who shall it be, Ellen?"

"I should like some name in the Wars of the Roses, but on the Lancaster side, of course."

"Why do you prefer that side?"

"Because I am so sorry for poor Henry the Sixth, and his misfortunes. He was a good man, I am sure, though he might not be a clever king."

"I like him too," said Mary. "If I had lived at that time, he should have had *somebody* to comfort him and give him a little honour, I know."

"Yes, and me too," cried Edward. "I'm a Red Rose."

And indeed his chubby face looked very like one.

I proposed taking the word LANCASTER. It would divide very well. Lank—Aster.

"What shall Lank be?"

"I know," said Lucy; "I heard Aunt Mortimer telling mamma that when Matilda was a child, her hair was so *lank* it never would curl. Let us be a party of girls whose hair will not curl. We can come in with it all about our ears, pretending we have got wet in the rain."

"I suppose that must do," said Ellen. "Now for Aster."

Caroline suggested bringing in one of the China asters which she would ask the gardener to pot off ready for the evening, if they were not all out of bloom. She proposed to bring the company to see it as a rare plant just arrived

from China, when she would expatiate upon its class and order, and the mode of cultivating it.

For LANCASTER, I advised, the adherents of Henry the Sixth discussing his character and misfortunes, and resolving to be faithful to him, and to their emblem, the Red Rose. "We might put on some red roses," said Caroline; "mamma has an old wreath, which I know we may cut to pieces."

"I'll tell you what will be best," cried Arthur. "We'll have a good skirmish between York and Lancaster. Some of us shall wear white roses, and some red; and the red shall meet the others and beat them, and make them throw all their white roses away. We can get up a capital row."

Here we were interrupted by Mr. Percy, who came to announce that the pond in the park was frozen so hard that the ice was quite safe for sliding and skating, and advised the boys to take advantage of it while the weather was favourable.

"Hurrah!" cried Henry, throwing down the History of Greece, while Arthur let Rome slip through his fingers more easily than even Augustulus had done. William made equally short work with England, and the boys rushed from the room with shouts that might have announced the fall of empires.

We ladies remained to put the books in their

places; and then followed to enjoy the fun in the park. We found the rest of the party at the pond before us, and most of them on the ice; some sliding, some skating: Mr. Stanley, in particular, was skimming over the ice, as if he had wings. He was a capital performer, and very good-natured in teaching the boys. He had brought out with him five oranges, four of which he placed upon the ice in a square, with about twelve feet between each, and the other in the middle. Closely followed by Henry, Arthur, and William, he skated in a small circle round the centre orange. When they had gone once round, they struck out at the same moment, each making a circle round one of the corner oranges; then altogether round the centre; then each again took his own corner. In this way they went on very regularly, but the ice being new continued cracking all the time. Mr. Stanley, who knew that the water was only two or three feet deep, allowed them to go on till the ice waved like a carpet, and the water oozed through every time he passed over the cracks, when he thought it advisable to try some other part of the pond.

Henry now proposed a mail-coach, which was performed by all the skaters laying hold of each other's sticks, the fastest taking the lead, and skating over the pond in all directions.

Several of the ladies ventured on the ice.

Lucy and Mary were almost as fearless as their brothers, but the little quiet Ellen preferred remaining with me on shore, and admiring her braver companions, notwithstanding their laughing at her. We stayed till it grew so cold and dark that Mrs. Percy ordered the children home.

CHAPTER XIII.

WALLACE—AGAMEMNON—GALILEO—Roman Galleys—Leo X. —SPARTAN—Black Broth.

AT the earliest possible opportunity we began our performance. The words chosen in the morning went off very well. The first was Wallace.

WALL. A company of travellers arriving in sight of the great wall of China, guided by a Chinese, with a long pig-tail, and dressed in a cloak with a girdle. They looked up at the cornice of the room, and expressed unbounded surprise and admiration, inquiring its height and breadth, saying they had never seen anything so stupendous, and that it must be a great defence to China. The guide bowing, and turning about so as to display his pig-tail to the utmost advantage, remarked that China was decidedly the mistress of the world; at which the travellers laughed, and the spectators guessed the word.

LACE. Caroline had seen lace made in Devonshire, and she desired the actors to supply themselves with pillows for cushions, and to stick in them rows of pins with reels of cotton fastened to them. The weavers sat with the pillows on their laps, and wove very industriously, but the word was soon guessed.

For WALLACE they chose the story of William Wallace and his army meeting Warrenne Earl of Surrey, and his troops, at Stirling.

The river Forth was there crossed by a long wooden bridge. The English general approached the banks on the southern side, and Wallace on the north. Warrenne sent two clergymen to offer a pardon to Wallace and his followers on condition of their laying down their arms.

"Go back to Warrenne," said Wallace to the messengers, "and tell him we are not here to treat of peace, but to restore freedom to our country. Let the English come on; we defy them to their very beards!"

The space between two rows of chairs down the middle of the room, made the river; and the chairs themselves, the banks. Wallace was very grand. We wondered that the English had been able to defeat such a hero; and, knowing his history, we could not for the time avoid preferring the Scotch cause to the English. We might have continued half the evening lamenting his fate, but the boys recalled us to the business in hand.

AGAMEMNON gave great satisfaction throughout, but I think our best scene was MEMNON. The chairs and tables were wheeled out of the way, and a large empty space cleared to represent the plain of the Nile, above which the Memnon towers. A single arm-chair was placed for Henry, who sat on the back of it dressed in

ancient Egyptian costume. He wore the sheet as at first proposed, but we found a much better contrivance than the scarf to imitate the head-dress. Long strips of cartridge paper, about three inches wide, were folded backwards and forwards till they looked like a large plaited frill, and bound with a fillet to Henry's temples. They hung half way down his waistcoat, and the ends were fastened by a girdle. He sat upright, with his hands spread flat upon his knees, and I hid myself behind him with the guitar. The lights were extinguished, and for a few seconds a solemn silence prevailed—the night was still and dark. Presently the door softly opened, and Caroline appeared, carrying her papa's little portable reading lamp; she entered slowly, holding her hand before it, so as to illuminate but a small part of the room. Morning was evidently dawning, but Memnon was still in shadow. Gradually she lowered her hand, and threw the light full on the face of the statue. At the instant the sun's rays reached him, the musical sounds were heard, for I began to play some chords on the guitar; first in very faint harmonics, then growing louder, and gradually dying away again, to imitate the kind of sound supposed to issue from Memnon.

Next came Galileo.

The boys contrived with the chairs an ancient *galley*, with two banks of oars. One set of rowers

were on the floor, and worked their oars between the bars of the chairs; the others sat on the seats, and rowed with long sticks through the backs. Henry, dressed in sheet drapery, stood at the prow, evidently bent on conquest, and holding a pasteboard standard, on which appeared the letters S. P. Q. R. The rowers pulled immensely hard —true racing stroke—but their exertions were not long needed, for the word was discovered.

The next scene represented Pope Leo the Tenth, in whose reign, as the children knew, the Reformation began. We had first thought of acting his commissioning Tetzel to sell the indulgences; then his meeting with Francis the First, when the Cardinals charged him not to touch his hat, lest the people should think a King was as great a man as a Pope: but we finally decided upon his reception of the English ambassadors, who came to present Henry the Eighth's book against Luther.

Leo, dressed in scarlet robes, sat in an armchair covered with crimson drapery. The Cardinals, in sheets and red shawls, with little red caps on their heads, stood on each side of his chair. Leo held in his hand a scroll, on which were the words FIDEI DEFENSOR, the title which he bestowed upon Henry in return for his book. The Pope received the book with great dignity, and presented the scroll to the ambassadors, who appeared extremely grateful. Leo then put out

his foot in a convenient position for them to kiss; which ceremony being performed, they retired.

GALILEO. The scene now lay in Tuscany, at the court of Duke Cosmo. Gaily dressed courtiers and ladies were walking about, exchanging compliments, and remarking on the clearness of the evening.

"We must prepare for the revel to-night," said one; "the evening star already warns us to return to the palace."

"So I perceive," answered a giddy young lady; "and with it, as usual, appears our solemn Professor of Mathematics."

Galileo slowly advanced; a quiet-looking old man dressed in black, with a telescope under his arm.

"Well, Signor Bat's-eyes," began the courtier; "what say the constellations? Do they promise you the philosopher's stone to-night?"

"Or the elixir of perpetual youth?" asked the gay maiden.

"But what do you hear through that tube?" inquired another.

"The barking of the Dogstar, and the howls of the Great Bear," replied a fourth.

These taunts and many others were lost upon Galileo, who silently awaited their departure for the revel. When left alone, he stealthily brought out from behind the screen a three-legged stand.

"These moments are precious," said he to

himself, as he hastily fixed his telescope. "The dungeons of the Inquisition are dark, and once within their walls, farewell to sun and stars!"

After Lancaster had been acted, and our Red Roses had come off more triumphantly than was often the fortune of poor Henry the Sixth, we had one more charade this evening; it was chosen by Arthur, and intended to be entirely performed by the boys. The girls were not even allowed to know the word, but were desired to guess with the other spectators.

The first syllable was rather alarming. Henry and Arthur came in without their jackets, and with handkerchiefs twisted round their hands so as to make them three times the natural size. They placed themselves in the middle of the room, and began, as we thought, to fight. There was a great deal of hitting at each other's faces, and yet they did not seem to hurt one another. We guessed Fight, Box, Hit, but they shook their heads; none of those would do. As they left the room, I heard Arthur say, "I suppose the ladies can't be expected to guess that; but really, Uncle Stanley ought." However, Mr. Stanley gave us no help, and the second scene began.

When the screen was removed, we saw chairs placed in a square with the backs towards the inside, so as to form a kind of pit or well. Baizes and carpets were spread over them, and in a conspicuous place hung the never-failing

tiger skin. Henry, Arthur, William, and Edward, were standing round, with their sleeves tucked up to their elbows, apparently engaged in some very hard work. They dragged the pieces of carpet out of the pit, and rubbed them most diligently. Edward, in particular, rubbed till his own face was as red as the drugget on which he was at work. Presently they threw it all back, saying the leather was not sufficiently softened, and must go into the pit again. They next began to work at the tiger skin, observing that they must first scrape off the hair; but on Arthur's producing a carving knife for that purpose, Mrs. Percy interfered. She said they had entered quite far enough into the realities of their trade, without proceeding to *tan* her valuable tiger skin.

After we had waited a long time for the next scene, Edward ran in to say that they had not actors enough, and wanted Caroline, Lucy, and Ellen to come and help. The young ladies obeyed the summons, but we still waited till our patience was exhausted, and I was despatched to hurry them. On entering the school-room, I found them in a most extraordinary mess. There seemed to be some very odd sort of cookery going on, for there was a large tureen on the table, with soup-plates and several iron and wooden spoons.

"What *can* you be doing?" I asked.

"Don't you see?" replied Arthur. "We are making black broth, to be sure: Spartan broth."

"But what has made you so long about it?"

"We could not settle upon a good recipe," Lucy answered: "so we are each trying our own; but it takes a good while to fill a whole tureen."

"Just look round, will you," said Arthur, "and see which you think is most like black broth. It is only the *look* of it that signifies, you know: nobody need drink it."

"That is fortunate," I thought to myself, as I inspected the cookery. Henry was at work with his box of colours, mixing sepia, indigo, and lake in a soup-plate—very black *that* was. Arthur and Lucy were engaged in preparations of ashes and water; they thought it looked like bad pea soup—*very* bad, I thought. Caroline, who hated dirt, had a kettle of boiling water, and was trying to bring strong black tea to the highest possible colour; but the others said her broth looked poor, and would never do. They were all so busy with their own experiments that they had forgotten to look after Master Edward, who had realised the idea in the strongest manner; and was jerking ink by penfuls into a soup-plate, mixing it with water, and stirring it up with the feather of the pen: of course spirting it all over his own face and dress. Having

secured the inkstand, I advised them to mix their messes together in the tureen, and proceed to the acting without further delay. Arthur accordingly took off his jacket, and tied a towel round his waist, which he thought made him look very like a Helot. While he carried the tureen on his head into the drawing-room, then returned for the plates and basins, and arranged them, the others had time to dress as Spartan citizens. They put sheets over their shoulders, and tied tow beards on their chins to look elderly; then marched into the room in a formal manner, and seated themselves at the table, looking very solemn. Henry, as Polemarch, ladled out the broth, and helped everybody. They pretended to eat it with great satisfaction, remarking how black it was, and how wise, and brave, and superior to everybody else it made them.

Presently Ellen entered, much more gaily dressed than the others. She made a low bow, and Henry begged to know who she was, at the same time offering her a seat. She informed him that she was a young Athenian nobleman come to Sparta in the train of Alcibiades, and having heard much of their black broth, she was anxious to taste it. Henry politely presented her with a plateful, and she pretended to try to drink it; but the moment it touched her lips, she began to sputter and make wry faces, as if she was taking

physic. She protested she had never tasted anything so nasty in her life; she was sure it must be poison.

"Young Athenian," exclaimed Henry, with great dignity, "to relish this broth, it is necessary to have first bathed in the Eurotas."

As the children were returning to the schoolroom, they met Mr. Percy, who had not been present at the acting.

"Where have you been this evening, papa?" said Ellen. "We have not seen you."

"I have been busy in the library," he answered, "and when you have taken off those majestic robes and beards, I have something to show you."

CHAPTER XIV.

Black letter Manuscript—"Romaunt of Robert à Stoker"—Explanation.

On their return to the drawing-room, Mr. Percy produced a packet of papers.

"Here is a manuscript," said he, "which, I think, you will like to hear read. It is a wonderful story of a great magician that was once seen in Europe."

"What is the date, uncle?" said William. "Was it written by a monk? And where was it found?"

"You may examine the first leaf for yourself: the rest is in such a peculiar condition, that I cannot let it go out of my own hands."

The contents of the first leaf were as follows:—

"THE FAYRE AND PLEASAUNTE ROMAUNTE OF ROBERT À STOKER.

"In ye olden dayes of merry Ynglonde yee muste stodie wel & undirstonde yat manie grete & straunge dinges dydde happe siche as shal not agen bee sene in ye londe quhile ye Water runnes & ye Sunne dothe shyn. For yt is wel

knowen to manie wyse & lerned clerkes quho have wrytte of y^e^ same in Bokes how yat byfore y^e^ dayes of our presẽt blessed Konyng diuers grymme Enchaunters dydde wone in y^e^ Londe & at tymes dydde goe rampauging ouer alle y^e^ Countrie sparynge in her furye ne grene ne wylde forẽte ne citye in soche wyse yat alle peple frõ y^e^ Konyng on hys throne wiy hys fayre Quene bi hys rizt honde to y^e^ lowest Knaue or Villein wiy hys Wyf Jugge or Margerye alle dydde at tymes holde her lyfis in delie feare and quakynge."

William took it, and looked at it in a learned antiquarian sort of way. It was written in black letter, on very coarse paper, which, as well as the ink, appeared discoloured by age. William remarked that it was in wonderfully good preservation, considering it was only on paper, not on vellum, and that the edges were not worn.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Percy. "Perhaps you had better not spend any more time in examining it. Hand it round, if you please, and let us see who can read it."

Each looked at it in turn, but nobody could make out a word, except William. At his uncle's desire, he began to read it aloud.

"THE FAIR AND PLEASANT ROMAUNT OF ROBERT À STOKER.

"In the olden days of merry England, ye must study well and understand that many great and strange things did hap, such as shall not be seen again in the land while the water runs, and the sun doth shine.

"For it is well known to many wise and learned clerks, who have writ of the same in books, how that before the days of our present blessed king, divers grim enchanters did wone in the land, and at times did go rampaging over all the country, sparing, in their fury, neither green nor wild, forest nor city; in such wise that all people, from the king on his throne, with his fair queen by his right hand, to the lowest knave or villain, with his wife Jugg or Margery, all did at times hold their lives in deadly fear and quaking."

"That is the whole of this leaf," said William, who read the black letter without any difficulty.

"I wish it was written in common English," observed Mary, who had been looking over his shoulder, "I can't read a word of it myself, and I can scarcely understand it when Willy does."

"I will read the rest in modern English, if you prefer it," said Mr. Percy: "only nobody must come and overlook me while I am reading."

"'In those days there lived that great magician, Robert à Stoker.'"

"What an odd name!" said Lucy, "Astoker."

"Nothing particularly odd," said William. "There were Thomas à Becket, and William à Court, and plenty such."

"'This Robertus was an awful man to behold,' continued Mr. Percy. 'So grim, and black, and dreadful was his face, that he seemed to be one of those demons who had begun life as pillars of black smoke, and gradually taken the shape of men. He was not a giant, though one might have supposed that no one else could have performed such deeds. He lived in a great castle in the outskirts of London, surrounded by his followers. No one could guess the limits of his power. The four elements were his slaves: he kept them in his castle, and sent them out to work when he pleased. Many of the king's best roads he had turned into iron, so that neither horses nor cattle could travel upon them. Flames of fire were constantly seen issuing from the interior of his castle, and people sometimes feared for the safety of London itself. Fire was evidently to him a mere goblin page, who obeyed his orders, and earth, air, and water, seemed to be equally under his command.

"'Time and space were nothing to Robert. His ugly face might be seen scowling at the London shopkeepers when they opened their shutters in

the morning, and before they had well finished laying out their goods in the windows, he would be at Dover, cheapening fresh fish for his breakfast.

"'He could discover what was happening at the other end of the kingdom at the very moment in which an event took place, and understand the words spoken a hundred miles off as soon as they were uttered.

"'But what frightened people most of all was an enormous fiery monster that he kept in his stables, and which had the strength of a hundred horses. A Stoker used to call it by a good many pet names, such as Phlegethon, Vulcan, Pluto, Acheron; but its most common name was Cerberus, and we may as well keep to that.'"

"Was it a dragon?" asked Edward.

"Not exactly; it had no wings, but it could run at a tremendous pace. Its skin was so hard, that neither arrow nor lance could pierce it, and it was covered with scales that glittered in the sun like shining brass."

"Did it ever devour men?" asked Mary.

"No, though it sometimes killed them."

"What was its food?" inquired William, who thought he had obtained a clue to the mystery.

"Its principal nourishment was derived from the forests of fern with which our island formerly abounded," replied Mr. Percy; "and its food was generally baked, for the sake of its digestion."

"Floored, William!" said Arthur, to whom he had communicated his suspicions of its being the first invention of artillery.

"'Fire and smoke issued from its mouth,' continued Mr. Percy, 'and its breathing might be heard at the distance of several miles. It would crush a man in an instant; but you may suppose everybody was careful not to cross its path, everybody but its wonderful master, Robert à Stoker. He would ride on its back, and scour the country, clearing all before him. The valiant knights of those days many times talked of attacking this monster, and opposing his progress over their lands; but they no sooner saw him, exhaling fire and smoke, and coming over the country with the speed of a whirlwind, than their resolution changed, and they were happy to come to terms with Robert as fast as possible.

"'Matters at last came to such a height, that the King's counsellors sat to deliberate concerning à Stoker, and devise some means of checking his proceedings; for they thought he was getting more power than the King himself, and that the country would soon be ruined with his rides, for there was nothing but tearing up trees, devouring gardens, knocking down houses, and altering the face of nature wherever he appeared.

"'After spending a long time in their deliberations, the King's counsellors summoned Robert to appear before them.'"

"Did he kill them?" asked Edward, eagerly.

"No; but he bewitched them in a most surprising manner; for, as soon as they saw him, they said he was a capital fellow, and proposed that the King should pay a visit to his castle. When the Queen heard that the King was to pay this visit, nothing would satisfy her but going with him. Of course, she must be attended by all her ladies, and the King by his knights, and they made a goodly company. They set out on a fine summer's day, decked after the fashion of their time, the knights in scarlet and gold, and the ladies in shining silks of as many colours as the flowers; and sometimes their head-dresses were of one colour, their mantles of another, and their farthingales of a third. The King and his knights rode on horseback, and the Queen and her ladies went in coaches such as were then the fashion.

"'When they arrived at Robert's palace, they were conducted into the hall. There they looked around with mingled amazement and dread. It was a mysterious place: boundless wealth lay strewed about in chests and bags; awful sounds, like panting and shrieking, broke the silence; a smell of sulphur pervaded the air, and here and there the eye caught glimpses of flames bursting through the gloom.'"

"How frightened the King and Queen must have been," said Mary.

"But is it true, uncle?" asked Edward.

"I cannot quite answer for the truth of stories of former days," said Mr. Percy; "but my own impression is, that it is perfectly true."

"Why, you don't mean to say that you believe it yourself, father!" exclaimed Arthur.

"I believe every word of it," answered Mr. Percy.

Henry and William looked at each other in despair; a vague idea crossed their minds that their uncle's head had been turned by his studies; but Mr. Percy continued reading rapidly:—

"'They were escorted to a street of houses occupying the centre of the hall. The King and Queen with several of their attendants entered at one door, and the rest were lodged in separate apartments. They were presently startled by the loud breathing of Cerberus, and saw him with Robert on his back coming furiously towards them. New terrors awaited them. For a moment the ground trembled, and before they had time to recover from the shock, they found themselves in rapid motion. Escape was impossible, for a spell had been cast upon the doors, and neither the King, Queen, nor any of the court could open them.

"'They now had reason enough to be frightened, for, dragged along by the furious Cerberus, they went over the tops of houses, then down to the ground, and the city was miles out of sight.

On they went at a pace that made them breathless, leaving behind them fields, rivers, towns, forests, till they saw rising straight before them a mountain, high, steep, and craggy, and as they came nearer, a black yawning cavern opened its mouth to receive them. In dashed Cerberus, and in followed the poor King and Queen, the way growing darker and darker, till they found themselves in the very heart of the mountain, in a cavern pitch dark, and cold as the grave.' "

" How dreadful !" " Poor Queen!" exclaimed Mary and Ellen.

" I am sure there is some humbug in it," whispered Arthur.

" So am I," said William. " People in the Middle Ages would never have described anything so impossible."

The manuscript continued: " The Queen preserved an admirable composure, and thought of her Royal Infants. 'Alas ! my amiable children,' she sighed, ' you little think where your poor mother is now ! Indeed I know not myself—where—where am I ?' "

" ' Where am I ?' growled the King.

" ' Where are we ?'" echoed the court.

" In the Box Hill Tunnel !" roared Arthur. " I have found you out. It's nothing but a railroad after all."

" Exactly," said Mr. Percy, laughing, and shutting his book.

"Oh, go on, papa;"—"Pray go on, uncle;" exclaimed Mary, Ellen, Lucy, and Edward: "please, Arthur, don't interrupt. What did they do next? Go on to the end."

"I cannot go on," he replied: "Arthur has broken the spell of antiquity, and my wonderful story has sunk to a common-place account of an every-day journey; and if you wish to go on to the end of it, you have nothing to do but to take tickets for the Great Western, and travel behind a stoker any day you please."

"But what was Cerberus?"

"The engine, to be sure," said Arthur. "It is all plain enough except about Robert's knowing what happened a hundred miles off. How was that?"

"By the electric telegraph," answered his father. "You have not seen that yet, but you shall at the first opportunity."

CHAPTER XV.

Keepsakes—Illuminated Almanack—Gilding—More Charades—Beauclerc—Dresses of Edward the Third's time—Pointed Shoes—Benefit of Clergy—Long Curls—King Pippin.

The holidays were fast drawing to a close, and there remained but little time for all we had to do. The children were anxious to finish presents for each other, and their uncles and aunts. Worsted work, drawing, needlework, and carpentering went on from morning to night. I was in everybody's employ; having to finish off boxes with gold borders without smearing them with paste; put the beads or floss silk into bags or slippers; sew pearl edges on cuffs and collars; match difficult shades of wool; sew tassels on cushions; melt gum; cut blotting-paper; bind portfolios; sew the fringe on mats; and, in short, be ready for all the odd jobs in which fancy-workwomen are apt to want help when matters have been driven off to the last moment.

Henry and William vied with each other in making drawings for their cousins: Henry copied Flaxman's designs from the Iliad, while William illuminated with pains and industry that almost rivalled the monks. The almanack which he made for Caroline was the admiration of us all.

It was in twelve pages, a page for each month, with designs on the margin copied from Mr. Percy's manuscripts. The initials of the months were illuminated, and the rest of the name in large gilt letters. The days were in black Gothic characters, except the red-letter days, which were in vermilion; *rubricated*, as William said.

I had some work to do in helping him to stain his drawing-paper. He said he wanted his almanack to look old, as if it might have belonged to the days of the Plantagenets, and had become dingy with age, and yet not dirty. None of our coloured drawing-paper suited his ideas, and he applied to Mr. Percy to know how he had coloured his first leaf of Robert à Stoker. Mr. Percy told him that he had contrived the proper tint by mixing together coffee and cochineal, soaking the paper in it for a few minutes, and then pressing it between blotting-paper.

The gilding was the next difficulty: he tried washing gum-water over the letters, then laying down gold-leaf, and when it was dry, brushing off the pieces that did not stick. This ought to have left the letter well gilt, but somehow it never would turn out neat; little bits of gold came out of the middle, or the edges were ragged, or the gold was smeared. So many misfortunes happened, that I thought it was hopeless, and tried to persuade William to give up the gilding, and be satisfied with only colouring his pictures.

But he was not a boy to lose patience easily, and he looked up different methods of gilding, in all the books he could find, and tried many experiments without success: at last he discovered a gilder living in the village, who explained to him the nature of oil-gilding, and supplied him with the proper *size:* this was to be carefully laid upon the letter and left to grow nearly dry. When it remained only a little sticky, or as his friend the gilder said, "had a nice *tack* upon it," the gold-leaf was spread over it; the loose pieces were then brushed off with a camel's-hair brush, and the letter remained perfect; it was afterwards polished with an agate lent him by Mrs. Percy. This size was found to adhere very firmly, especially to the skin of little Edward, who, having once got access to it, had produced a *tack* upon his hands and face, which for several days resisted the utmost influence of soap and water.

Everything was at last finished, presented, and admired; and all the work being done, there remained still a clear day, which it was resolved to devote to a final bout of charades. Uncle Harry and I were as usual summoned, and Matilda also begged leave to be one of the party.

It was Mary's turn to choose the word, and she fixed upon Beauclerc, the name given to Henry the First, on account of his learning. His father, William the Conqueror, having felt his own want of scholarship, was very anxious to

have his sons better educated than himself; he used to lecture them on the subject, telling them that "an unlearned prince was a crowned ass;" but none of them attended to him except Henry, who being afraid of becoming "a crowned ass," studied so diligently, that he obtained the name of Beauclerc, or Fine Scholar.

"What shall *Beau* be?" said Lucy. "It is a French word. I do not see how we can use it, unless we change the spelling, and have a bow and arrow, or tying a bow."

"It is sometimes used as a cant expression for a fop, or what Arthur calls a dandy. Would you like to have a beau of Pope's time?

> 'Sir Plume of amber snuff-box justly vain,
> And the nice conduct of a clouded cane.'

He must wear a wig and a sword, and buckles to his shoes, and come into the room in a very affected manner, swinging his cane, and tapping his snuff-box."

"I think I can suit them better," said Uncle Harry, "with a gentleman in the height of the mode in Edward the Third's time. What do you think of long pointed shoes fastened to his knees with chains; stockings red on one leg, and yellow on the other; his coat half white and the other half blue; a long beard, and a silk hood fastened under his chin, and embroidered with figures of dancing men or animals."

The children laughed, and Henry observed, "What donkeys those fellows were!"

"There have always been wise people to look down upon foolish fashions as well as you," said his uncle. "Edward the First used to dress so plainly that a friar who was once in his presence could not help expressing his surprise. 'Father, father,' said Edward, 'you know how God regards garments: what could I do more in royal robes, than in this my gaberdine?'"

"How were the ladies dressed?" asked Matilda. "I dare say they had better taste than to go about such figures."

"I cannot say much for them. As *you* were not there to direct them, they followed their own fancies. They wore head-dresses three feet high, in the shape of sugar-loaves, with streamers down to the ground. I am afraid you would not have approved of such bonnets, nor of their tunics half of one colour and half of another. However, the men were worse."

"Aunt Esther," said Ellen, "*do* you think we could make a pair of those pointed shoes?"

"I dare say we could. What have you to make them of?"

She brought a long strip of green calico, and we established ourselves as shoemakers in the days of the Plantagenets. Uncle Harry sat by, directing us. I was going to cut a piece about a couple of inches long for the point of the shoe;

but he stopped me. "That will not do, Esther. If I had been a gentleman of Edward the First's court, I never would have employed you, though you might very possibly have been shoemaker to the King. Please to make my peaks a foot long, at least, or don't expect my custom."

"There; will *that* satisfy you?"

"Yes, I flatter myself I may hope to attract some notice with those."

"What a good shoemaker you would have been yourself, Uncle Harry!" said Mary.

"No doubt I should. What was that game I heard you playing yesterday, about apprenticing your sons?"

"I apprenticed my son to a shoemaker, and the first thing he sold was a pair of W. B.'s."

"Wellington Boots. But my great-great-great-great-grandfather apprenticed his son to a shoemaker in Edward the First's time, and the first thing *he* sold was a pair of C's."

"C's.—Clogs?"

"No. I do not know that they wore clogs. *Crackowes;* a pair of crackowes; that was the name of the peaked shoes."

By this time we had sewed our strips of calico into three-cornered bags, which Mary said looked like scissor-sheaths for a giantess. They were now to be stuffed.

"Will you have some of my tow?" asked Arthur.

"Just the thing," said our master. "The real crackowes were stuffed with tow."

"We fill our shoes with *toes* now," said Lucy; "but they would not be long enough to fill crackowes."

"Do not stuff them too tight, Mrs. Shoemaker," was Uncle Harry's next order; "or how are they to be twisted?"

"Why should they be twisted?" asked Mary.

"You do not suppose that I would wear shoes whose points were not twisted? They are to be twisted like rams' horns. That was the fashion."

We twisted them accordingly; first running a piece of wire up the middle to keep the spiral steady. Then they had to be fastened to common shoes. Caroline, our constant provider, supplied us with a pair of slippers, and we sewed our points to the toes. We then put silk cords to the points to fasten them to the wearer's knees, and I thought our work was finished: but no, Uncle Harry was not yet content: he said the upper-leathers were to be cut into the shape of church windows; but that being done, they were pronounced complete, and Uncle Harry recommended them to Matilda as a pattern for her next worsted-work slippers.

We continued working at the dress till our *Beau* was perfect; and as the girls said they should like "something old" for *Clerk* also, I pro-

posed a man in Middle Age costume, reading and writing.

"But clerks are only at church," little Edward remonstrated; "and you know we must not bring anything about church into our play."

"Clergymen were called clerks, were not they?" Ellen asked. "How could a common man reading and writing be guessed for a clerk?"

"Because," said Uncle Harry, "though the title was first given to clergymen only, it was afterwards extended to any one who could read; and, instead of saying a great scholar, or a bad scholar, people used to say a great clerk, or a bad clerk."

"I should have been a clerk, then," said Edward, "for I can read."

"So much the better for you," said Uncle Harry; "for if you had been on your trial, you might have claimed your benefit of clergy, and so perhaps got off."

"How would he have got off by having the benefit of clergy?" asked Ellen. "I thought that meant having clergymen to visit him in prison before he was hung."

"More than that," said her uncle; "it was to prevent his being hung at all. By being a clerk he was entitled to appeal to the Ecclesiastical Court."

"I think," said William, "we might act a clerk claiming his benefit of clergy. There was a man

in Richard the Second's time who tried to bring in a bill for lessening the number of bishops and ladies living at court. The King was very angry with the House of Commons for such impertinence, but they assured him they meant no harm; and gave up the man, who would have been hung if he had not been a clerk."

"I do not see how you could well make a scene of it," replied his father. "A criminal claiming benefit of clergy was entitled to a new trial before a bishop and twelve clerks; he first made oath of his own innocence, then twelve witnesses swore that they believed him, and then the twelve jurymen swore that they believed *them;* and if the bishop was satisfied, the criminal was acquitted. You could not act all this."

"I should think very few people could have been condemned," said Ellen, "if only knowing how to read gave them such privileges."

"The privilege was not quite so great as you may think," replied Uncle Harry. "It only extended to particular crimes; and for a long time very few besides the clergy knew how to read. But after the invention of printing, so many of all classes learnt, that a law was made that none but clergymen should have benefit of clergy more than once; and any layman who claimed it was burnt in the thumb, that he might be detected if he claimed it a second time."

Caroline said she thought it would be a long

dull scene, and that we must not be too long over any one syllable, as we wanted to finish off all our words; so we returned to the first idea of a person studying.

For Beauclerc, Uncle Harry, whose historical recollections were apt to be rather mischievous, suggested Henry the First and his courtiers with their hair carefully dressed in very long curls. They used to be so vain of these curls, and spend so much time in arranging them, that the clergy thought it necessary to preach against the fashion. Bishop Serlo at last preached a sermon which so impressed the King and the court, that they unanimously agreed to give up their curls. The bishop determined to take them at their word without giving them the chance of changing their minds, so he pulled out a pair of shears which he had for some time kept hidden in his sleeve, and cut off all their curls with his own hands.

Arthur and Lucy much approved of this story; but Henry the First was rather a favourite with William, on account of his love of study, and he argued that if we meant to represent his complimentary title of Beauclerc, we ought not to choose a circumstance in which he would only look silly. As we could not deny this, we agreed to let William select a story for us at his leisure.

"Edward would have been quite proper for one of the courtiers, with his long curls," said Mary.

Poor Edward, whose golden ringlets were the pride of his nurse's life and the plague of his own, exclaimed that he wished with all his heart some bishop would come with a pair of shears, and cut them off for him.

"Why does he wear them?" Henry asked. "Does Aunt Mortimer make him? They are a great nuisance for a boy."

"Oh, mamma would not insist upon it," replied Matilda. "She was going to cut them off the other day, but nurse made such a fuss, that we did not like to vex her. She cried, and said she should never be happy again if Master Edward lost his sweet curls."

"Well, never mind, Ned," said Arthur. "Make the best of it now, and the first thing I will do if ever I am Bishop of London shall be to cut your hair."

Mary wondered what Bishop Serlo would have said to the crackowes.

"Much the same, I suppose, as the bishops who saw them," Uncle Harry answered. "The clergy were vehement against them. Bishops preached sermons, councils issued decrees, and Popes bulls to forbid them, but all in vain; for three hundred years they held their ground: people would do anything else the Pope bid them, change their kings, their laws, or their religion, but not change their shoes."

Here we were interrupted by Edward's nurse

summoning him to dinner. The other children dined with us when there was no company; but Edward was so young that his mamma thought it better for him to dine early in the nursery. It was an unfortunate moment for nurse to fetch him, because the recollection of her daily teasing about his curls had made him rather sulky, and he obeyed her summons in not the best of tempers. Soon after they were gone, she sent a message to beg Miss Mortimer would come and speak to him, because he was "so tiresome nothing could be done with him." Matilda and I went together, and as we drew near the nursery door, we heard poor nurse saying in a very mournful tone,—

"Now, Master Edward dear, *do* be a nice young gentleman, and use your fork."

Edward. "I won't. As long as you make an old baron of me with those nasty curls, I'll be a baron in not using a fork. The barons ate with their fingers. Uncle Percy says so; and sometimes they sat on the floor, too; I'll sit on the floor!"

Nurse. "Now don't, dear. Sit still, and eat your pudding nicely, there's my King Pippin."

Edward. "I'm not a King Pippin: a great boy of five years old like me!"

Here Matilda and I interfered, and forced him to sit properly, and eat tidily, and speak civilly to nurse, on pain of not letting him have any-

thing more to do with the charades. He was rather ashamed of himself, and submitted quietly to having his hands washed and his hair brushed after dinner. We stayed through it all to keep the peace, and then took him away with us.

"What was the row?" asked Arthur, as we re-entered the school-room: and on our explaining matters, Uncle Harry begged to know what was Edward's objection to being called King Pippin. Edward could not exactly say, but thought it made him look like a baby.

"Who do you suppose King Pippin was?" his uncle asked.

"He was a king in the fairy tales," said Mary.

"Indeed! I was not aware of that. Of course I do not mean to dispute it: but there was also a King Pippin or *Pepin*, King of France, and not a bad king neither. 'As prudent as Pepin' used to be a proverb, so Edward need not be affronted at being compared to him."

"How comes nurse to talk about King Pippin?" Mary asked. "She does not know anything of the History of France.

"No; but Pepin is supposed to have been a jolly little fellow, very short, fat, and good-humoured, and his name has been a favourite with nurses for many a century. Nurses are often fond of talking about kings to their babies.

In Cœur-de-Lion's time, when the Saracen children cried, their mothers and nurses used to say to them, 'Make haste and be good, or King Richard will catch you.' Edward would not be afraid of King Richard, and he need not be ashamed of King Pepin. Shall I tell you a story about him, Edward?"

"Oh yes, please."

"Pepin the Prudent was, as I told you, very short and fat, and his courtiers used, behind his back, to make a joke of his stumpy little figure. Somehow or other, their quizzing came to Pepin's own ears, but he had too much sense to mind it. However, as they grew more and more disrespectful, he thought it as well to give them a lesson, and therefore invited them to see a fight between a lion and a bull. When the company were assembled, the courtiers seated in a safe place, and the King on his throne, the animals were let loose. The lion rushed at the bull, fixed on his throat, brought him down, and nearly strangled him. 'Now,' said King Pepin to his courtiers, 'which of you will make that beast let go his prey?' They looked at one another, but nobody stirred: no knight in the assembly was so daring as to risk his life in trying to separate the beasts. When nobody replied to the challenge: 'That task must be mine,' said Pepin; and descending from his throne, he drew his sword and advanced towards the animals. The lion raised himself up

and glared at him, but before there was time for any mischief, little Pepin cut off his head with one blow. He then went quietly back to his throne, and said to his courtiers: 'David was a little man, and yet he triumphed over Goliath. Alexander too was a little man, but his arm was stronger, and his heart braver, than that of many of his captains who were taller than he.' 'This,' as an old writer says, 'taught Pepin's officers discretion, and his people respect.'"

CHAPTER XVI.

Duke Brithnoth and the Abbot of Ely—Pageants and Riddles in the time of Queen Elizabeth—Her dresses and the Dustman's present—Her reproof to Leicester and her "Lion port"—Cæsar and Brutus—The Hat of Gustavus Adolphus.

"Now, what is the next word to be?" I asked. "Is it not Arthur's turn to choose?"

"Let Matilda choose," answered Arthur. "It is the first time she has acted with us, so we ought to encourage her."

Matilda said she should like to patronise Queen Elizabeth; we none of us seemed to have recollected her.

"Hurrah for Queen Bess!" Arthur shouted. "But what can the word be? Elizabeth is as bad as Nurjehan."

Mary began dividing the syllables as if she were saying a lesson of spelling. "E-li-za-beth; that will not do. Eliza-beth; that is as bad. Eli-zabeth."

Uncle Harry said *Ely* would do for one division, and he could tell them a story about it.

"In the time of King Edgar, Brithnoth, Duke of Northumberland, was marching against the Danes; and one day, when he and his followers were very tired and hungry, they arrived opposite the great Abbey of Ramsey. Monks considered

it part of their duty to show hospitality to travellers, and Duke Brithnoth thought he was sure of finding food and shelter in this rich abbey; so he sent an officer to the abbot with this message: 'Give my service to my Lord Abbot of Ramsey, and if he pleases, I and my men will dine with him to-day.' But the abbot and his monks were stingy and disobliging, and did not at all like Duke Brithnoth's message: so they held a council, and one said that such an army would eat up all their provisions; and another that they should have to turn out of their cells to lodge the soldiers; and another that such a number of people would give them a great deal of trouble, and put them out of their usual comfortable ways; and the abbot said that the convent would be ruined by entertaining all that company. However, they did not like to affront Duke Brithnoth, as the convents in that part of the country were dependent upon him for protection against the Danes. They therefore returned answer that they had neither accommodation nor supplies for the soldiers, but that if the duke himself liked to come, they should be very happy to see him.

"But Duke Brithnoth cared more for his soldiers than himself, so he sent a second message. 'Tell my Lord Abbot that I cannot fight without my men, and I will not dine without them.' They continued their march for some hours, and,

towards evening arrived at the Abbey of Ely, which was then but small and poor. Still, it was their only chance of obtaining refreshment, and the duke sent his message. 'Give my service to my Lord Abbot of Ely, and, if he pleases, I and my men will sup with him to-night.'

"The abbot called a council of his monks, as was usual when there was any business to be transacted, though he very well knew what such good-natured fellows would say. As soon as he told them the message, they exclaimed how glad they were to have an opportunity of being useful to the good Duke Brithnoth and his brave soldiers, who protected the country from the Danes; and that they would give up their cells for the soldiers to sleep in, and make the best feast in their power, and willingly live on short commons themselves for a time to make up for it. The abbot was as hospitable as his monks, and sent a hearty invitation to Duke Brithnoth, begging him to come directly, and bring all his men, 'the more the better.' The monks gave the soldiers an excellent supper and comfortable beds. Those that had not room in the dormitories slept in the halls and offices, and the monks themselves slept where they could, and never let their guests find out that they put anybody to inconvenience.

"Next morning Duke Brithnoth came into the chapter-house, and, after thanking the abbot and

monks for their kindness, he made them a present of six of his best manors, to belong to the monastery of Ely for ever; and from that time the Abbey of Ely began to rise in importance till it became one of the most considerable in England."

The children much approved of this story; but, though we might have acted Ely, we could invent nothing for the other half of the word, and Elizabeth was therefore rejected. I now proposed having the name of some celebrated person in her reign; Burleigh or Hatton: Sir Christopher Hatton, who was so famous for his dancing, might figure away before the Queen. I thought, also, we might contrive to bring in one of the pageants with which people were fond of entertaining Queen Elizabeth.

"What was a pageant?" asked Mary.

"A sort of show with acting in it. Sometimes an allegorical story; sometimes a triumphal arch with figures at each corner, fancifully dressed, reciting verses in the Queen's praise."

"In most of her journeys," said Uncle Harry, "some pageant greeted her whenever she entered a town. At one place, a person who was present describes her being met by four boys dressed as allegorical personages; first, Fame, 'a very excellent boy,' as the account tells us; then Salutation, Gratulation, and Obedient Good Will. They all made long speeches, and then drew their swords to show their readiness to defend the

Queen. Besides these boys' speeches, the poor Queen had to listen to several other tiresome harangues, and I think she must have been very glad when the last orator, having finished his prosing, 'thearwithall made a manerly leg, and so held his peas.' What do you think making a leg means, Mary?"

"I am sure I don't know. Jumping?"

"No: making a bow."

"There were plenty of queer devices besides speeches," I said, "and always very complimentary to the person for whose amusement the pageant was exhibited."

"Yes; but Queen Bess had no objection to that," said Uncle Harry. "With all her sense, there never lived a lady, wise or foolish, who could stand a stronger fire of compliments: but that was the fashion of the time. At the marriage of her mother, Anne Boleyn, there was a grand masque of the Judgment of Paris. The story of the goddesses and the apple was acted at full length, and followed by an apology to Queen Anne that the apple had been given to Venus. A boy recited some verses which began:

'Queen Anne so gent,
Of high descent,
Anne excellent
In nobleness;
Of ladies all
You principal
Should win this ball
Of worthiness.'

" He proceeded to say that Jupiter wished the apple to be given to Anne, and that Paris quite agreed with him, and was going to present it, but it had struck them both that it really was not worth her acceptance, and that they had better marry her to Henry, as the proper and suitable reward of her merit.

'The golden ball
Of price but small,
Have Venus shall
The fair goddesse;
Because it was
Too low and base
For your good grace
And worthiness.'"

" I do not think their verses were good for much," said Lucy.

" Nor I," replied her uncle; " but they satisfied the King and Queen. I suppose you would have preferred the pageant in Richard the Second's time, in which they made a horse dance on the tight rope, to the music of trumpets sounded by oxen."

" Yes, I should have liked to see that."

" And perhaps you might have approved of a masque acted by some students for Queen Elizabeth's amusement, in which great part of the fun consisted in quirks something like riddles."

" Oh, do tell me some of their riddles," exclaimed Lucy: " I should so like to have them for my riddle-book."

"I am afraid the quibbles that pleased Queen Elizabeth and her masquers will look but strange in your riddle-book. However, two or three perhaps may do, though I do not think you will be able to guess them. 'Why will a musician never make a good vintner?'"

As Uncle Harry anticipated, nobody could guess it.

"Because he deals too much in flats and sharps."

"I do not understand it even now," Lucy said.

Her uncle explained that insipid wine was called flat, and sour wine sharp; and she knew what musical flats and sharps meant.

Uncle Harry gave us another. "Why is a cannibal the most loving man to his enemy?"

Arthur guessed this. "Because people don't eat things they don't like."

"Right; or, as the students worded it, 'a cannibal is the lovingest man to his enemy, for willingly no man eateth that he loveth not.' There are plenty more, but these are among the best, Lucy; and I do not think you will consider these very good."

"Never mind," she answered. "I shall like to have them in my book, as they were good enough for Queen Elizabeth."

But it was time to return to business. Ellen asked how Queen Elizabeth ought to be drest.

"Would you like the dress in which she went on horseback to Cambridge?" I inquired. "A black velvet gown, a close cap set with pearls, a hat spangled with gold, and a plume of feathers."

"Rather an odd riding habit," said Lucy; "I think she might have found something better; for our History of England says she had three thousand gowns, and never wore the same more than once."

"I do not believe she had three thousand gowns," said Uncle Harry. "I was looking over, the other day, a list of her wardrobe taken two years before her death, and in that there were only about sixteen hundred articles altogether, including not only gowns, but cloaks, aprons, petticoats, stomachers, ruffs, and even slippers. And you must remember that most of these were presents, which it would not have been gracious to give away again."

"Who gave her so many presents?" Mary asked.

"Foreign princes used to send her the costumes of their countries; and on New Year's day it was the custom for almost everybody about her court to make presents to her, and she to them. Even Mr. Smith the dustman one year made her a present of two pieces of cambric."

"How very strange for a great Queen to take a present from a dustman!" said Ellen.

"It was customary, and did not hurt *her* pride:

she exchanged gifts with everybody. Her own donations generally consisted of plate, but her subjects offered her all sorts of things. Her cook sent her a pie, and her physicians and apothecaries gave her boxes of sugarplums and sweetmeats."

"I dare say they were pills in disguise," interrupted Arthur.

"Not at all. They were preserved ginger, candied orangepeel, and comfits. What seems the most strange is her accepting small sums of money from her courtiers. Five pounds from one, ten from another, and so on. Most of her presents were materials for dress, and sometimes even good homely articles, such as stockings, pocket-handkerchiefs, and nightcaps."

"If people gave her such quantities of clothes, no wonder she could not wear the same things often," said Mary; "but I think she might have given them away when she had done with them."

"It seems to have been the fashion for people to keep old clothes and leave them to their heirs," said Uncle Harry. "Among Queen Elizabeth's state robes, there was an old black velvet gown of Queen Mary's, with part of the trimming torn off, so that it must certainly have seen its best days, but still it was carefully kept."

"I don't see how we shall manage a scene in Elizabeth's reign, after all," said Ellen. "We have not fixed upon a word yet."

"Would TUDOR do?" Matilda asked, with some hesitation. She was so modest that she was afraid of proposing anything that the others might not approve.

I thought it was a very good word, and would allow of our bringing in anything we pleased about Queen Elizabeth.

William said it ought to be something characteristic of her race rather than herself, showing some quality common to the Tudors.

"Their pride," said Ellen.—"Their magnificence," said Arthur.

"Their obstinacy," said Lucy.—"Their firmness," said I.

"Their tyranny," said Caroline.—"Their power of ruling," said Henry.

"Their bigotry on their own side, whichever it was," said William.

"Their determination to keep church and state together," said Uncle Harry. "Opinions seem to differ; which of you would have written this epitaph on Queen Elizabeth?

'Spain's rod, Rome's ruin, Netherland's relief,
Earth's joy, England's gem, World's wonder, Nature's chief.'

"I am sure I would not," said Ellen; "for I never can like her, because of her killing Mary Queen of Scots."

"Ah, I wish she had not done that," said Mary.

"Mary Queen of Scots was always entering into conspiracies against her," Arthur said, rather quickly, as if he did not like to hear any fault found with Queen Elizabeth.

"Of course she was," said Lucy; "and so would I, if I were kept in prison by any one who had no right to put me there."

"Yes," said Uncle Harry. "We must not allow our admiration to blind us, Arthur. Elizabeth's reign was most glorious, and she was one of England's greatest sovereigns; but her treatment of Mary is a lasting reproach to her and her ministers. I admire Elizabeth almost as much as you do, but I always wish she had not imprisoned Mary Queen of Scots: for that was the real injustice, and provoked Mary to enter into conspiracies against her."

"Have you decided upon Tudor for the word?"

"Yes, if we can settle how it is to be acted. Aunt Esther, what do you advise?"

"I am inclined to recommend the story of Bowyer, Elizabeth's usher, refusing admittance to one of Lord Leicester's followers who had no right to enter the apartment. Lord Leicester insisted, and threatened to have Bowyer turned out of his office. Bowyer, who knew he had only done his duty, went at once to the Queen, and told his own story. She was very angry with Leicester's presumption, and gave him a thorough good scolding.

"'My Lord,' said she, 'I have wished you well; but my favour is not so locked up for you that others shall not partake thereof; and if you think to rule here, I will take a course to see you forthcoming. I will have here but one mistress and no master!'"

"Which speech," added Uncle Harry, "is said to have 'so quailed his lordship that his feigned humility was ever after one of his best virtues.'"

This story took the children's fancy, and Ellen began practising the speech, and trying to get up a proper queen-like demeanour, but she did not give satisfaction; the others said she was not half fierce enough; that Queen Elizabeth, as everybody knew, had a "lion port," whereas Ellen looked more like a lamb.

Ellen objected that it was only the poet Gray who talked of Elizabeth's lion port, and that it might not be true.

"I beg your pardon," said Uncle Harry: "Queen Elizabeth and the British Lion learnt manners in the same school, long before Gray was born. An old historian describes her reception of a speech that did not please her; 'Lion-like rising, she daunted the malapert orator, no less with her stately port and majestical demeanour, than with the tartness of her princely checks!' Now, Lucy, suppose you try to act her; you are the most like a wild animal."

Lucy succeeded very well. She looked ex-

tremely dignified, and yet quite ready to box the ears of a maid of honour on the slightest provocation; and she would have made a very good Queen Elizabeth, but there still remained difficulties in the way of TUDOR: the syllables could not be managed. For the first, Henry and Arthur of course proposed the assassination of Julius Cæsar, and his last exclamation, "Et TU Brute!" The three boys began rehearsing attitudes; one for Pompey's statue, one for the fallen Cæsar, and one that should express the ferocity of Brutus, Cassius, and all the other conspirators together: but they could not agree upon anything to their minds for the second syllable, though it sounded very easy.

"After all," said Henry, "why should we not have *Hatton*, as we at first proposed? I know a story that will do for *Hat*, out of the Life of Gustavus Adolphus. In one of his battles, he was fighting hand to hand with the French general Sirot, who did not know him. They fired their pistols in each other's faces, and Sirot's so nearly hit Gustavus, that his hair was burnt, and his hat knocked off. Just then some of his party came to the rescue, and carried him off without his hat, and Sirot's servant picked it up and gave it to his master.

"Next day Sirot appeared, wearing the hat as a trophy, though not knowing whose it had been. Some Swedish prisoners recognised it as having

belonged to their king, and were in great distress, fearing he must have been killed. They entreated Sirot to tell them if Gustavus was living, and in that way he found out with whom he had been fighting."

"He afterwards presented Gustavus' hat to the Emperor of Austria," said Uncle Harry; "and it was sent by him as an offering to the shrine of the Virgin Mary, at Loretto."

We agreed to have Hatton; and after discussing many more words, and fixing upon one or two, we separated.

CHAPTER XVII.

Final performance — Falstaff — Scene from Shakspeare — Agincourt — Earliest use of fire-arms — Scene from the "Lady of the Lake"—Hatton—Dress of Queen Elizabeth—Flattery—Sir Christopher Hatton's dancing—Words proposed—Lessons and Play—Uses of History—Conclusion.

Evening came, and with it our final performance. The actors were in a great hurry to begin, and the moment dinner was over, repaired to the school-room. Everything had been so carefully arranged in the morning, that no time was lost in preparation.

Scene the first.—Little Edward came running into the drawing-room, and after jumping and hopping about for some time, fell down; and began to cry. Then Henry, in a great coat and hat, by way of Edward's papa, came in, saying:

"What! have you tumbled down? Never mind, tumble up again."

"Oh, I can't; I want somebody to pick me up."

"Oh, I will pick you up, my dear little boy," said Ellen, who seemed to be his mamma. "Poor little darling, have you fallen down and hurt yourself? Come with me, and we will rub it with pomade divine."

The spectators guessed knee, child, hurt, bruise,

fall; but which of these was right, we were not able to decide till the next scene.

The second syllable was STAFF.

Henry had read the life of Hooker that morning, and he had taken a particular fancy to the story of Richard Hooker when a young man, receiving the walking *staff* of Bishop Jewel; and he and Arthur could not be happy without acting the scene, and repeating the conversation between those two good men, though with some omissions, in order not to bring sacred words into their play. The representative of the bishop sat at a table with a book before him, from which he read his speech, and thereby saved himself a great deal of trouble.

The whole word was FALSTAFF, and it may be easily guessed that Prince Hal and his merry companions came before us. Uncle Harry had privately arranged this part with the boys in the morning, omitting so much as to bring a scene of Shakspeare's Henry the Fourth within charade length.

Arthur was Sir John Falstaff. A pillow was tied round his waist to make him fat enough, and his dress put over it; viz., an embroidered waistcoat, short cloak, slashed sleeves, short trousers, and a sword.

The others had the same kind of dress, except that the girls wore long cloaks to hide their frocks; and Henry, as Madcap Harry, had a

cap and feathers. William acted Poins; Lucy, Gadshill; Ellen, Bardolph; and Mary, Peto. As they were minor characters, there was not so much pains taken with their costume as with that of Arthur and Henry.

The dialogue was written out and laid on the table, in case any one should forget his part.

Scene.—Prince Hal and Poins at a table, drinking.

Enter FALSTAFF, GADSHILL, BARDOLPH, *and* PETO.

Poins. "Welcome, Jack. Where hast thou been?"

Falstaff. "A plague of all cowards, I say—Give me a cup of sack, boy—A plague of all cowards."

Prince Hal. "How now, woolsack, what mutter you?"

Fal. "A King's son! If I do not beat thee out of thy kingdom with a dagger of lath, and drive all thy subjects before thee like a flock of wild geese, I'll never wear hair on my face more. You, Prince of Wales!"

P. Hal. "Why, you round man, what's the matter?"

Fal. "Are you not a coward? answer me to that; and Poins, there?"

Poins. "You fat fellow, an' ye call me coward, I'll stab thee."

Fal. "I call thee coward! I'll see thee hanged before I call thee coward; but I would give a hundred pounds I could run as fast as thou canst. Give me a cup of sack. I am a rogue if I drunk to-day." (He drinks.)

P. Hal. "What's the matter?"

Fal. "What's the matter? There be four of us here have ta'en a thousand pound this morning."

P. Hal. "Where is it, Jack? where is it?"

Fal. "Where is it? taken from us it is! a hundred upon poor four of us."

P. Hal. "What, a hundred, man?"

Fal. "I am a rogue if I were not at half-sword with a dozen of them two hours together. I have 'scaped by miracle. I am eight times thrust through the doublet, four through the hose; my buckler cut through and through; my sword hacked like a hand-saw; *ecce signum.* I never dealt better since I was a man: all would not do. A plague of all cowards! Let them speak; if they speak more or less than truth, they are villains."

P. Hal. "Speak, sirs; how was it?"

Gadshill. "We four set upon some dozen——."

Fal. "Sixteen, at least, my lord."

Gads. "And bound them."

Peto. "No, no, they were not bound."

Fal. "You rogue, they were bound, every man of them, or I am a Jew else, an Ebrew Jew."

Gads. "As we were sharing, some six or seven fresh men set upon us ——"

Fal. "And unbound the rest, and then came in the other."

P. Hal. "What, fought ye with them all?"

Fal. "All? I know not what ye call all; but if there were not two or three and fifty upon poor old Jack, then am I no two-legged creature."

Poins. "I hope you have not murdered some of them."

Fal. "Nay, that's past hope: I have peppered two of them: two, I am sure, I have paid; two rogues in buckram suits. Thou knowest my old ward;—here I lay, and thus I bore my point. Four rogues in buckram let drive at me ——"

P. Hal. "What, four? thou saidst but two, even now."

Fal. "Four, Hal; I told thee four."

Poins. "Ay, ay, he said four."

Fal. "These four came all a-front, and mainly thrust at me. I made me no more ado, but took all their seven points in my target, thus."

P. Hal. "Seven? why, there were but four, even now."

Fal. "In buckram."

Poins. "Ay, four, in buckram suits."

Fal. "Seven, or I am a villain else."

P. Hal. "Prithee, let him alone; we shall have more anon."

Fal. "Dost thou hear me, Hal?"

P. Hal. "Ay, and mark thee too, Jack."

Fal. "Do so, for it is worth the listening to. These nine in buckram that I told thee of——"

P. Hal. "So, two more already."

Fal. "Their points being broken, began to give me ground; but I followed me close, came in foot and hand, and with a thought, seven of the eleven I paid."

P. Hal. "O monstrous! eleven buckram men grown out of two!"

Fal. "But, as luck would have it, three knaves, in Kendal green, came at my back, and let drive at me; for it was so dark, Hal, that thou couldst not see thy hand."

P. Hal. "Why, how couldst thou know these men in Kendal green, when it was so dark thou couldst not see thy hand? Come, tell us your reason; what sayest thou to this?"

Poins. "Come, your reason, Jack, your reason."

Fal. "What, upon compulsion? No; were I at the strappado, or all the racks in the world, I would not tell you on compulsion. Give you a reason on compulsion! If reasons were as plenty as blackberries, I would give no man a reason upon compulsion, I."

P. Hal. "Well, breathe awhile, and then to

it again, and when thou hast tired thyself, hear me speak but this."

Poins. " Mark, Jack."

P. Hal. " We two saw you four set on four: you bound them, and were masters of their wealth. Mark, now, how plain a tale shall put you down. Then did we two set on you four: and, with a word, outfaced you from your prize, and have it; yea, and can show it you here in the house: and, Falstaff, you carried yourself away as nimbly, and roared for mercy, and still ran and roared, as ever I heard bullcalf. What a slave art thou, to hack thy sword as thou hast done; and then say it was in fight! What trick, what device, canst thou now find out to hide thee from this open and apparent shame?"

Poins. " Come, let's hear, Jack; what trick hast thou now?"

Fal. " I knew ye, as well as ye knew yourselves. Why, hear ye, my masters: was it for me to kill the heir-apparent? Should I turn upon the true prince? Why, thou knowest, I am as valiant as Hercules: but beware instinct, the lion will not touch the true prince. Instinct is a great matter; I was a coward on instinct. I shall think the better of myself, and thee, during my life; I, for a valiant lion, and thou for a true prince. But, lads, I am glad you have the money. Gallants, boys, lads, hearts of gold, all the titles of good fellowship come to you! What, shall we

be merry? shall we have a play extempore? *or a charade?*"

"Well, that word is plain enough," said Mr. Percy, "and you managed it very well."

"I did not much like acting it, though," said Ellen; "I only acted to please Arthur and Willy."

"Why did you dislike it, little Ellen?"

"I don't like Falstaff. He does nothing but tell falsehoods."

"We need not *like* him, you know, Ellen," argued Arthur; "but he is very amusing, and when Prince Hal himself was reformed, he turned him off."

"Yes," she answered; "I have always been glad of that."

"Was Falstaff really an historical character?" Caroline asked. "I always thought he was only an invention of Shakspeare's."

"The character is an invention, I suppose, though not the name," Mr. Percy replied. "There was a Sir John Falstoffe living at that time, though I do not know that he was really one of Prince Hal's wild companions."

The children now returned to the school-room to arrange another word. Arthur presently reappeared, and having begged his father to come out of hearing of the ladies, said in a hesitating manner:—

"We don't mind telling *you*, father, in confi-

dence, that we are going to act Agincourt; and we want you to be so good as to let us have a little gunpowder, because fire-arms were first used at the battle of Agincourt. Will you give us a pinch out of your powder-flask?"

Mr. Percy shook his head.

"A very little, just for Henry the Fifth's own use? We will be very careful. I am Henry the Fifth."

"I am sorry to refuse your highness," said his father; "but it is quite impossible. Besides the danger to your royal self, your mother and aunts would be extremely frightened. You must not think of it. However, I can tell you for your comfort, that it is very doubtful whether fire-arms were used at Agincourt. The first time I remember mentioned as *certain* was at the siege of Orleans in Henry the Sixth's reign."

"But you know, father, a good many of *our* books say that they were used at Agincourt, and as gunpowder was invented nearly a hundred years before, they very well might. I assure you *we* all believe it."

"I dare say you do; but I cannot consent to their being used in the drawing-room. However, I can supply you with what will answer your purposes just as well—a bundle of Waterloo crackers; will you have them?"

"Oh, yes; and thank you. How stupid of us

never to think of them. They will be just the thing."

"Here they are then. Fire away."

Arthur ran off with his treasure, and the charade began.

Scene the first.—When the screen was removed, we saw William as an old man, in a rough cloak, with a long white beard, sitting in a corner of the room at a table, on which were an hour-glass, a telescope, and some flowers.

"Hermit?" asked Mrs. Percy.

"No," said Caroline. "He *is* a hermit, but that is not the word."

"Oh, I see your meaning!" Mrs. Mortimer exclaimed. "*Age.*"

> "And may at last my weary *age*
> Find out the peaceful hermitage."

Scene the second.—Enter Arthur, as a fat landlady, in a great number of petticoats. He wore a cap and false curls, which he had borrowed from nurse, and he had put a piece of black sticking-plaster over one of his front teeth, to look as if it was out. Altogether he was so changed, that when he first came in, even his mother did not know him. Two of the girls followed him as housemaids, Mary with a broom, Ellen with a duster; Lucy in a great coat, as "Boots," was cleaning a shoe; and Henry as waiter, drawing a cork.

Arthur bustled about, helping his maids to set everything to rights, and talking all the time.

"A fine season indeed! I have never known the house so full. Waitah!"

Henry. "Ma'am!"

Arthur. "Take up dinner to the party in number 2."

Henry. "Directly, ma'am."

Arthur. "Boots!"

Lucy. "Ma'am!"

Arthur. "Don't forget to call the gent in number 3 to-morrow at four o'clock, for the early train. Dear, dear, the things there are to think of! Its lucky I've something of a head.

A loud knock at the door. All rush to open it. Enter Caroline and William as travellers, wrapped up in cloaks and shawls.

Caroline. "Can we have rooms here to-night?"

William. "And supper directly?"

Arthur. "Oh, yes, ma'am; excellent rooms, ma'am. Yes, sir; capital supper, sir. What would you please to take? Beautiful rooms upstairs, ma'am; steaks, cutlets, fowls, and fish in the larder, sir. Famous for fish here, sir; a fine view of the sea from your windows, ma'am. This way, ma'am; pray take care of the step. Waiter! Boots! bring the lady and gentleman's luggage."

Lucy dragged in a portmanteau, Henry a

carpet bag; Mary took one bandbox, Ellen another; and they ran against one another, threw the things down, and made such a noise and confusion, that Mr. Stanley said he thought the unfortunate travellers did not seem very likely to "take their ease at their *Inn*."

For the third syllable we chose a tableau of the *Court* of James the Fifth of Scotland; and the scene in the "Lady of the Lake" in which Ellen Douglas discovers the knight of Snowdoun to be the king.

> "She gaz'd on many a princely port,
> Might well have rul'd a royal court,
> On many a splendid garb she gaz'd,—
> Then turn'd bewilder'd and amaz'd,
> For all stood bare; and in the room,
> Fitz-James alone wore cap and plume.
> To him each lady's look was lent;
> On him each courtier's eye was bent;
> Midst furs and silks and jewels sheen,
> He stood, in simple Lincoln green,
> The centre of the glittering ring,
> And Snowdoun's knight is Scotland's king!"

Mrs. Percy and Mrs. Mortimer had lent us several plaid shawls and scarfs: Arthur had a very pretty Lincoln green archer's dress, and we contrived a beautiful plume with paper cut like feathers: we lighted as many candles as possible, and grouped ourselves in as courtlike a circle as we could; and our Ellen made a very pretty little representative of her namesake.

Third scene.—A tremendous battle; crackers in all directions. The English, led on by Henry

the Fifth, kept up a close and effective fire till the whole French army were driven out of the room, and "the earthquake shout of victory" raised by the conquerors almost drove us out of the room too.

During the fight, I had been posted as sentinel upon little Edward. We pretended he was a prisoner, in order to keep him from coming out with a line of his "History of England in Verse," which he had been spouting at odd moments all the day. But when the battle was fairly won, we gave him his liberty, and let him bawl out for the information of the company:

"France feels at AGINCOURT fifth Henry's rage."

BEAUCLERC.—Our expectations were fully realized in the affectations of the Beau and the studious diligence of the Clerk. The crackowes were particularly successful. The story William had chosen for the entire word was that of Henry the First sending his bishops to the council summoned at Rheims by Pope Calixtus the Second.

"Go," said Henry; "salute the Pope in my name; hear his apostolic precepts, but take care to bring none of his new inventions into my kingdom."

HATTON.—The two first scenes do not require much description. They were both made out of Henry's story of Gustavus Adolphus. In a smart skirmish he lost his *hat*, and in the next scene

Sirot appeared with it *on*, and answered the inquiries of the prisoners.

But our third scene was superb. It was not very quickly arranged, because both Queen Elizabeth and Sir Christopher Hatton were a long time dressing, and the courtiers and maids of honour followed their example. Sir Christopher's costume was not difficult: of course he must have

> "His bushy beard and shoestrings green,
> His high-crown'd hat, and satin doublet;"

but they were all at hand. He wore a satin spencer belonging to one of his sisters, a beard of twice our usual size, an immense ruff, a gold chain, and enormous green rosettes to his shoes.

But the queen gave us more trouble. I was required to dress her, for Uncle Harry said he could not undertake the details of her Majesty's toilette, though he knew in a general way that some of her gowns were embroidered all over with flies and black beetles, and others with snails and spiders.

"How hideous!" said Caroline. "Could they invent no better patterns than those, with all their trouble and expense?"

"Oh, she had other patterns too," I answered. "One of her favourite petticoats was worked in rainbows, clouds, and flames; and another had a border of fountains, trees, and waves of the sea."

"There was no want of variety, I assure you,"

added Uncle Harry. "One of her gowns was trimmed with gold *galthroppes*, or balls with spikes fixed in them, to be thrown in the way of an enemy's cavalry."

"She ought to have reviewed her troops in that dress," said Arthur.

"She had also a stomacher, which, perhaps, you will think appropriate. It was worked with flowers, and a great lion in the middle."

"Oh, we *could* manage that!" exclaimed Mary. "Caroline, will you lend us that pattern you are working of a lion in his den?"

Caroline lent her great worsted-work lion, and we turned down the sides of the canvas, so as to make it into the shape of a stomacher, and pinned it on Lucy, and very fierce and fine it looked; then she put on the brocade petticoat she had so often worn. We could not, on such short notice, embroider the lining with eyes and ears, or any other of Queen Elizabeth's patterns; but it looked very well as it was. We decked her out with all the necklaces and bracelets we could muster, and a crown, a long veil, a great ruff made of silver paper plaited, and a white feather screen for a fan. I tried to imitate as well as I could a portrait I had once seen of Queen Elizabeth. This picture, however, represented her holding a rainbow in her hand, and in one corner was the motto, "No rainbow without the sun;" meaning to compare the Queen to the sun.

Arthur said it was not *her* fault if people paid her foolish compliments.

There Caroline begged to differ from him. Nobody, she was sure, paid foolish compliments to anybody who did not like and encourage them: and she quoted the old riddle. "What is it that makes everybody sick but those who swallow it?"

But we had not time to enter into a discussion upon flattery. Now that Queen Elizabeth was dressed, her court was to be held without delay. We enthroned her in due state, with her maids of honour round her, and withdrew the screen. Presently the door opened, and Sir Christopher Hatton entered, the very top and pink of the mode, to begin the court Ball.

> "The grave Lord Keeper led the brawls,
> The Seals and Maces danc'd before him."

Arthur, who acted Sir Christopher, had never been able to learn really to dance in his life; his performance being always very much like that of a dancing bear: but now he flourished away in a most wonderful manner; pointing his toes, putting his head on one side, sticking first one arm a-kimbo, and then the other, and making grimaces that he thought were exactly like his sisters' French dancing-master. But twenty French dancing-masters could not have come up to him. William and Edward, as "the seals and maces,

danced before him" in much the same style, making all sorts of queer bows and scrapes which they meant for "manerly legs:" but when at last Sir Christopher danced up to the Queen more affectedly than ever, and dropping on one knee, besought her Majesty to honour him by leading a brawl with him, we all exclaimed in the midst of our laughter, that if we had been Queen Elizabeth, we should never have made him Lord Chancellor for the sake of his dancing.

This was the last charade we acted. We had plenty more words ready: Plantagenet, Gascoin, Cromwell, Stewart, Mary, Lockheart, Duncan, Nestor, Cobham, Nelson, Jason, Psyche, Saxon, Cæsar, Warwick, Achilles, Runnymede, &c. &c., but we should not have had time to do justice to them, and we resolved to put them off till our next meeting.

When tea was finished we sat round the fire, talking over the past holidays, and after many a hearty laugh, we gradually fell into a graver strain. Mary said that if she had been told that she and her companions would bring their lessons into their play, as they had done in the charades, she could not have believed it.

"You have not found your play the less amusing for it, have you?" said Mrs. Percy.

"Not at all," said Ellen. "Only one naturally expects lessons to be *learning*, and play to be quite different."

"*Forgetting*, I suppose?" said Uncle Harry.

"Not exactly; but to have nothing to do with learning."

"That is all very well," observed Mr. Percy, "for a little boy like Edward; but as you become older, you will find most of your amusements grow out of the lessons you have been made to learn when children."

"But then," said Lucy, "what is the use of our lessons, if they are only to be amusements after all?"

"That *is* one use of them," said Mrs. Percy. "We do not take so much trouble to teach you, merely for the sake of tiring you, but in order to give you the means of taking pleasure in the subjects that interest educated people, when you grow older."

"You do not look quite satisfied, Lucy," said her father. "Let us hear what is puzzling your little head."

"I don't quite know how to say what I mean," she answered. "Some lessons, I know, are useful, such as arithmetic and needlework; but what use besides amusement is there in others? In history, for instance?"

"Try to find out what history teaches us, and then you will be able to answer your own question."

"Let us collect opinions once more," said Uncle Harry. "I like to have all their different

ideas. Suppose we begin with the youngest: Edward, what do *you* think is the use of history?"

"I think," answered Edward, looking very solemn, "it sets us good examples."

"And you, Mary?"

"I think it is very *amusing* to know what people used to do, but I don't see the *use* of it."

"Perhaps," said Ellen, "if we laugh at their ways, it may teach us that those who come after us may laugh at ours, so we should not be conceited."

"I think," said William, "though I know Arthur and Henry wont agree with me, that considering what great things were done by people long ago, modern inventions have not improved the world so much as might be expected."

"And we see," answered Arthur, "that other times were no better than ours, and that many things which were thought very fine in their day came to no good."

Caroline said, "I think it shows us the consequences of actions which could not be foreseen at the time."

"There is one use of history," said Henry, "which often strikes me when I am alone, though we do not think about it in our amusements: that it makes us understand much better the persons mentioned in the Bible."

"That is very true," replied Mr. Percy; "and when you go still deeper into history, you will

find it has another use which you have not yet begun to think of. You will see how literally prophecies contained in the Bible have been fulfilled."

"If I had known history better in my young days," said Uncle Harry, "it would have kept me from some serious mistakes. I was once nearly persuaded to think the invention of printing a misfortune, and that the revival of learning had injured the cause of religion. I hope none of you will ever make such a mistake as that."

"And, another thing," added Mrs. Percy, "I hope you will not forget to be contented with your own time. People who have read only one side of history are apt to fancy that former times were better than our own; but more knowledge will convince us that our wisdom lies, not in wishing to bring back the peculiarities of past days, but in being thankful for our own advantages, and endeavouring to 'do our duty in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call us.'"

THE END.

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